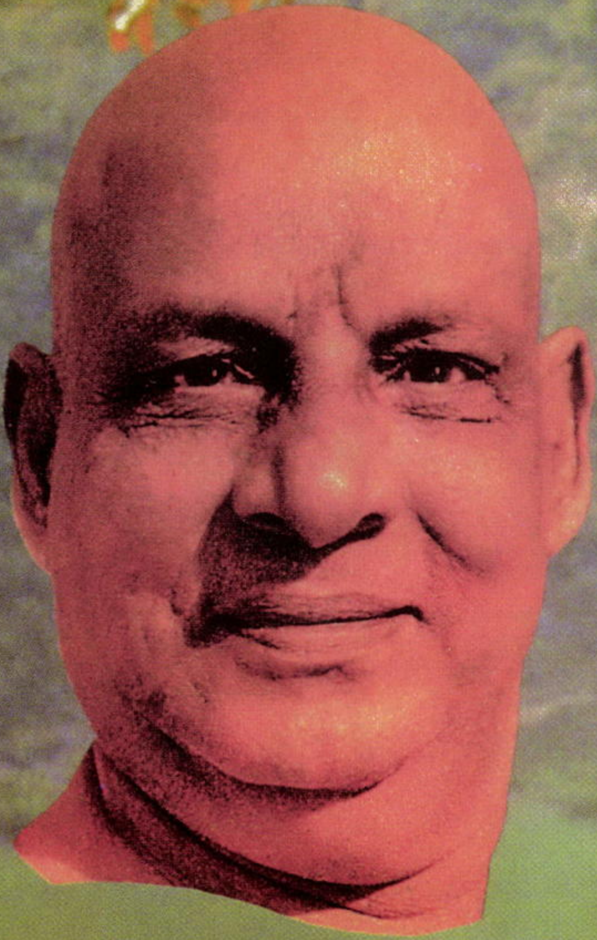

Sivananda

RAJA YOGA

RAJA YOGA

THE YOGA SYSTEM OF PATANJALI

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Raja Yoga

By Swami Sivananda

Life and Works of Swami Sivananda

Volume 4

Published by

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY
P.O. SHIVANANDANAGAR—249 192
Distt. Tehri-Garhwal, Uttarakhand, Himalayas, India
www.sivanandaonline.org

First Edition: 1986
Second Edition: 2007
Third Edition: 2011

[500 Copies]

©The Divine Life Trust Society

ISBN 81-7052-220-X
EO70

PRICE: ₹175/-

Published by Swami Padmanabhananda for
The Divine Life Society, Shivanandanagar, and printed by
him at the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press,
P.O. Shivanandanagar, Distt. Tehri-Garhwal, Uttarakhand,
Himalayas, India
www.sivanandaonline.org

CONTENTS

Preface vii
Acknowledgements viii
Introduction ix

Chapter 1: Yoga **1**
What is Yoga? 1
Different Paths in Yoga 4
Benefits of Yoga 5
Outline of Raja Yoga 7
Practice 10
Who is a Yogi? 11
Karma, Bhakti and Jnana in Raja Yoga 12

Chapter 2: Sadhana **15**
Four Letters From Lord Yama 18
Be Regular 19
Difficulties in Sadhana 20
Necessity for a Guru 22
Three Things 25

Chapter 3: Mysteries of the Mind **26**
Nature of the Mind 27
Time — A Mode of the Mind 34
Atman is One 34

Metaphysics of the Inner Man 35
The Power Within 36
The Subconscious Mind 38
Mind is Like a Chameleon 39
Marvels of the Mind 41
Power of Thought 41
Chitta 44
Vrittis — Modifications of the Mind 46
Saṁskaras 50
Gunas 51

Chapter 4: Control of Mind **57**
Balance of Mind 57
Purification of Mind 62
The Two Wings of the Mind-bird 65
Control Thoughts 66
Victory Over Mind 71
Desires — The Cause of Bondage 74
Vasanas — Subtle Desires 79
Vairagya — Dispassion 84
Abhyasa — Practice 85
The Mind and the Senses 86
The Sense Organs (Indriyas) 88
Control of Senses 89
Tongue (The Most Turbulent Indriya) 90
Vow of Silence (Mauna) 92

Chapter 5: Afflictions of the Mind **95**
What are Afflictions? 95
How to Remove Likes, Dislikes and Clinging to Life 99
How to Remove Evil Thoughts 100
What is Pratipaksha Bhavana? 100
Root of Afflictions 101
Fruits of Afflictions 103
Karma and Environment 104
Avoid Misery 105
The Cause of Misery 105
The Means for Kaivalya 107

Chapter 6: Yama **109**
  Ahimsa — Non-violence 110
  Satyam — Truthfulness 118
  Astheyam — Non-stealing 120
  Brahmacharya — Purity 122
  Practice of Brahmacharya 125
  Aparigraha — Non-covetousness 127

Chapter 7: Niyama **129**
  Saucha — Purity 130
  Santosha — Contentment 130
  Tapas — Austerity 132
  Svadhyaya — Study of Scriptures 135
  Ishvara Pranidhana — Self-surrender 136

Chapter 8: Asana **138**
  Asanas for Meditation 139
  Benefits of Asanas 140

Chapter 9: Pranayama **141**
  What is Prana? 141
  What is Pranayama? 144
  Control of Breath 144
  Pranayama and the Mind 146
  Physical Benefits of Pranayama 148
  Hints for Practice 148
  Pranayama Exercises 150
  Pranayama and Hatha Yoga 152
  Pranayama and Pratyahara 153

Chapter 10: Pratyahara **154**

Chapter 11: Dharana **159**
  Concentration as Part of Raja Yoga 162
  Benefits of Concentration 164
  Concentration in Daily Life 165
  Ethical Basis 167
  A Hard Task 168
  Useful Hints for Concentration 170
  Exercises in Concentration 173
  Concentration on Anahata Sounds 175

Objects of Concentration 176
Attention and Interest 178
Hatha Yoga Techniques 184

Chapter 12: Dhyana **187**
What is Meditation? 187
What Happens in Meditation? 189
Benefits of Meditation 192
Meditation and Rest 195
Mind and Meditation 196
Qualifications for Practice of Meditation 204
Requisites 207

Chapter 13: Hints on Meditation **209**
Places for Meditation 217
Important Places for Meditation 218
Seclusion and Meditation 221
Meditation Room 223
Best Time for Meditation 224
Reasons for Failure 227
Preparation for Meditation 232
Signs of Progress 233
The Power of Silence 235
Meditation and Work 236

Chapter 14: Kinds of Meditation **238**
Light of Lights 240
Meditation on a Buffalo 242
Meditation on Virat Purusha 243
Saguna Meditation 244
Simple Saguna Exercises 245
Meditation on a Rose 247
Meditation on Twelve Virtues 247
Meditation on Divine Songs 248
Meditation on Gita Slokas 248
Meditation on Gayatri 249
Uddhava's Meditation 250
Vedantic Meditation 251
Formulae for Meditation 253
Meditation on Mahavakyas 255

Positive Meditation 256
Negative Meditation 257
Nirguna Meditation 257
Simple Nirguna Exercises 258
Saguna and Nirguna Meditation Compared 259
Meditation and Action 261

Chapter 15: Philosophy of OM **265**
Where it is Heard 266
OM as Brahman 269
Japa of OM 271
Meditation on OM 272
Meditation Exercises 273
Meditation on Soham 276
Benefits of Chanting OM 278

Chapter 16: Practice of Samyama **280**

Chapter 17: Obstacles **282**
Obstacles in Meditation 282
(a) *Physical Obstacles* 285
(b) *Mental Obstacles* 289
Obstacles on the Spiritual Path 300
(a) *Subtle Obstacles* 310
(b) *Psychic Obstacles* 316

Chapter 18: Experiences in Meditation **323**
Physical Sensations 323
Feeling of Separation 325
Astral Journey 326
Visions 327
Vision of God 328
Lights in Meditation 329
Anahata Sounds 331
Experiences of Sadhaks 332
In the Hours of Meditation 335

Chapter 19: Siddhis **336**
Stories of Siddhas 338
Requirements for Attaining Siddhis 339
Real Nature of Spiritual Experiences 340

Chapter 20: Samadhi **343**
How to Attain Samadhi 346
The Mind in Samadhi 349
Deep Sleep and Samadhi 350
Cosmic Consciousness 351
Turiya — The Fourth State 353
Jada Samadhi and Chaitanya Samadhi 354
Savitarka Samadhi and Nirvitarka Samadhi 356
Savichara Samadhi and Nirvichara Samadhi 357
Sananda Samadhi — The Blissful Samadhi 359
Sasmita Samadhi 359
Raja Yoga Samadhi 359
Jnana Yoga Samadhi 363
Bhakti Yoga Samadhi 365
Samadhi and Work 366

Glossary **368**

PREFACE

Swami Sivananda did not write text books as such. The books he wrote were the outpourings of wisdom from his own direct realisation of the Truth.

From his books you will derive not only the benefit of his wisdom and knowledge of both practical and esoteric matters pertaining to yoga, but also the power of his spiritual force.

Swami Sivananda had a unique style — simple, direct and compelling. His books are not dull treatises on yoga and philosophy, rather his enthusiasm and eagerness to help all is evident in every page, lifting the reader to new heights of understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to:

H.H. Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj, whose mammoth task was to compile and edit almost 300 of Holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji's books into 19 volumes, in spite of his demanding programmes and failing health.

Swami Lakshmi Ananda for the final editing.

The Publishers

INTRODUCTION

The Inward Path to Liberation

Yoga is the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. Just as camphor melts and becomes one with the fire, just as a drop of water when it is thrown into the ocean becomes one with the ocean, the individual soul — when it is purified, when it is freed from lust, greed, hatred and egoism, when it becomes pure — becomes one with the Supreme Soul.

The process of yoga embodies an ascent into purity, into that absolute perfection which is the original state of man. It implies therefore the removal of the enveloping impurities, the stilling of the discordant vibratory tempo of the lower sheaths and the establishment of a state of perfect balance and harmony.

Now, all the above-mentioned factors that bind down the individual soul may be seen to be operating on a larger scale through humanity as a whole. The present age is enmeshed in ignorance (characterised by restlessness, a blind clinging to earthly existence, perverted individualism and voluptuous abandonment to pleasures of the flesh) and violence, strife and discord in all walks of life.

Modern age is the machine age. As such it is power-ridden. Discovery of newer ways of generating power, exploiting fresh aspects of known forces and inventing machines to make machines is the present craze under man's control, but man himself does not have his senses and his mind under his control. This has resulted in the misuse and abuse of the fruits of civilisation and science, because all power corrupts. The adoption of the yoga way of life is the release from and the guarantee against such abuse of power and the resultant disaster. Training in yoga brings to man several supernormal powers that no machine can ever generate. Yet the discipline laid down on the path ensures against their abuse.

Swami Sivananda

YOGA

What is Yoga?

The term 'yoga' comes from the root 'yuj' which means 'to join'. In its spiritual sense it is the process by which the identity of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul is realised by the yogi. Yoga means union with the Lord. This is the goal of human life. It is the be-all and end-all of human existence.

Yoga also means 'addition'. When the restless individual soul is added to the Supreme Soul it finds eternal rest and supreme satisfaction.

The word 'yoga' is also applicable in a secondary sense to all those factors that go to constitute yoga, that are conducive to the final achievement or fulfilment of yoga and as such indirectly lead to final freedom or perfection. A yogi is one who has reached the highest state of samadhi (asamprajnata). One who is attempting to get perfection in yoga is also called a yogi.

The first object of life in yoga is to get over body-consciousness. Separate yourself from the objects without, and unite yourself with the Atman within. This is yoga.

Yoga is the science that teaches the method of joining the human spirit with God. It is the divine science which disentangles the jiva from the phenomenal world of sense objects and links him with the Absolute, whose inherent attributes are infinite knowledge, unbroken joy and an eternal life. It is the science of sciences which helps the aspirant to attain Self-realisation. Patanjali Maharishi, the exponent of the raja yoga system, is the master scientist. Western philosophers — Pythagoras, Plato, Emerson, Schopenhauer, Spinoza, Descartes, Max Muller and Paul Deussen — have eulogised the science of yoga very highly.

Yoga is spiritual or divine life. Yoga means union or communion with God. The yoga system believes in a personal God and pays much importance to revelation. It teaches how to live in union with God. Life in God brings eternal bliss. To live in God, to commune with God, is yoga. God is an ocean of bliss. Those who forget God undergo sufferings, troubles, miseries and tribulations.

Yogic living implies discriminative living. Yoga is equanimity, equipoise or equilibrium. It is skill in the performance of actions. Yoga is disconnection from union with pain and freedom from attachment and desires. It is the turning away of the senses from the objective universe and the concentration of the mind within.

Yoga is eternal life in the soul or spirit. It transmutes a man into divinity. It brings a message of hope to the forlorn, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak and knowledge to the ignorant. It is the secret master-key to open the realms of eternal bliss and deep abiding peace. It helps the practitioner to enter into conscious communion with the Lord through samadhi, to separate himself from the three gunas and eventually to attain kaivalya or liberation.

Yoga is a perfect practical system of self-culture. You can attain harmonious development of your body, mind and soul by the practice of yoga. You can acquire absolute control over the whole of nature by its practice. It helps the student to attain ethical perfection and perfect concentration of the mind and to unfold various psychic powers. It teaches applied psychology. It cannot be used for attaining petty ends, such as to find out whether a man is alive or not or to find out who has stolen an article. If it is so used it will become a jugglery or magic; it is no longer yoga. Yoga is not for attaining siddhis or powers, it is a method of strict discipline of mind, senses and the physical body. It imposes restrictions on diet, sleep, company, behaviour, speech and thought. It should be practised under the guidance of an expert yogi.

The yogi sees the soul everywhere and realises the Lord everywhere. He regards the happiness and pain of all as his own happiness and pain, because he has cosmic consciousness, he has broken down all barriers of distinction, separateness and difference. He has equal vision and equanimity of mind. He enjoys the divine ecstasy of samadhi or the bliss of God-consciousness. His heart is filled with pure love and compassion.

Yoga advocates complete detachment from secular interests for the sake of practising uninterrupted meditation. It recommends meditation on the inner light of the heart or anything that is pleasing to you. It prescribes that one should withdraw himself from the ordinary affairs of life for the purpose of practising constant meditation. Yoga also can be practised at home by having a well-regulated life.

Spiritual growth is gradual. There is progressive evolution. You should not be in a feverish hurry to accomplish great yoga feats or enter into nirvikalpa samadhi in two or three months.

When the senses are unrestrained, when the body cannot obey you, when the passions are still ruling you, you cannot enjoy peace everlasting. You cannot fix the mind even on a point or object of meditation. Therefore follow the line of self-discipline presented in the science of yoga. The senses have to be thoroughly subjugated, divine virtues have to be cultivated and evil qualities have to be eradicated. The mind has to be thoroughly controlled. The task is a stupendous one, it is up-hill work. You will have to practise rigorous austerity and meditation and wait patiently for the results. You will have to march in the spiritual path stage by stage.

You will not be able to catch your own shadow, however hard you may try to get at it. Face the sun. Turn your back upon the shadow. The same shadow will run after you. Even so, if you run after money and earthly possessions you will not get them. Turn your back upon mundane wealth. Soar high in the realms of the bliss of the Atman, the inexhaustible spiritual wealth. You will be in possession of all divine attributes. If you crave for a thing you will not get it. You will become a slave. Renounce the craving or desire for the object. The objects will follow you by themselves.

Your motive in learning yoga must be pure. You must have the one idea of getting Self-realisation through absolute celibacy. Have sex-sublimation. You must not misuse the power gained through yoga. Analyse and scrutinise your motive thoroughly. There are very many temptations and dangers on the yoga road.

If you have no attachment for the objects of the senses, if you have no thoughts which give rise to desires and impulses for the enjoyment of sensual objects and if the mind rests peacefully in

Brahman, then you are established in yoga.

In the path of yoga the timid, the miserly and the cringing will not succeed. Those who are bold and who can sacrifice their lives, their heads, can be successful in this path. Only they who can fight back 'blood, sweat and tears' can reach the abode of immortal bliss and float in the river of peace and happiness.

Different Paths in Yoga

Lust for power, material greed, sensual excitement, selfishness, passion for wealth and lower appetites have drawn man from his true life in the spirit into the materialistic life. He can regain his lost divine glory if he practises the principles of yoga in right earnest. Yoga transmutes animal nature into divine nature and raises him to the pinnacle of divine glory and splendour.

There are various kinds of yoga. Yoga varies according to the temperament of the practitioner, e.g. karma yoga for the active, bhakti for the devotional, raja yoga for the mystic and jnana yoga for the rational.

*Hatha yoga is the path of controlling the prana and the physical body. It is not separate from raja yoga. Hatha yoga means the union between 'ha' and 'tha'. 'Ha' means the sun, 'tha' means the moon. Prana is known by the name 'sun'. Apana is known by the name 'moon'. Therefore hatha yoga is the union of the prana and the apana. Hatha yoga prepares the student for raja yoga. It is an auxiliary to raja yoga. It is a step to other yogas, not an end in itself.

Jnana yoga is the path of self-analysis, discrimination, reflection and enquiry. Raja yoga is the path of self-restraint or control of the vrittis of the mind. Bhakti yoga is the path of devotion and surrender, remembrance of God and singing His glories. Karma yoga is the path of selfless service without egoism and attachment to fruits. Mantra yoga is the path of reciting mantras of God. Laya yoga is the path of dissolution of the mind, through hearing the anahat sounds. Kundalini yoga is the path of awakening kundalini and joining it with Lord Siva in the sahasrara chakra. Lambika yoga is the path of controlling prana through khechari mudra.

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* See Volume II: Health and Hatha Yoga

All yogas culminate in jnana yoga. Vedanta alone is the crowning glory of all yogas. It is the summit of the ladder of yoga. All meet in one common place — God — just as all radii meet in the centre of the circle, just as all spokes meet in the hub or nave of a wheel.

A karma yogi says that one can realise through karma yoga alone; a bhakta says that one can attain God-realisation through bhakti yoga alone; a jnani says that one can attain realisation through jnana yoga alone. But all the three theories of karma, bhakti and jnana are equally recognised by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The *Bhagavad Gita* alone is the best harmonising combination of the three different pathways of God.

Benefits of Yoga

Yoga holds out to us the way of self-perfection, so that one may learn how to live in the Eternal. Through the practice of yoga you are changed. You pass from darkness into light, from duality into oneness, from separation to unity, from bondage to liberation.

Even a little practice of yoga reduces misery, lessens the sense of despair and frustration and promotes confidence, strength, peace and happiness. Yoga purifies, transforms and divinises.

To be balanced in success and failure, gain and loss, pleasure and pain, to be a perfect master of oneself in all conditions and circumstances, to go through the routine of life patiently and joyfully amidst the din and clamour of the world — these are some of the characteristics of a disciplined soul or a yogi who has equanimity of mind.

Yoga helps in the co-ordination and control of the subtle forces within the body. You can have calmness of mind at all times by the practice of yoga. You can have restful sleep, increased energy, vigour, vitality, longevity and a high standard of health. You can turn out efficient work within a short space of time and have success in every walk of life. Yoga will infuse in you new strength, confidence and self-reliance and give you mastery over the mind, tongue, passions, emotions, impulses, temper, etc. The body and mind will be at your beck and call.

In yoga there is a new gospel, a new life, a new outlook, a new rule of conduct, a new joy, a new knowledge and a new hope for man. He grows and evolves quickly. He unfolds his latent powers and dormant faculties. He gets mastery over the impulses, cravings, senses, prana, mind and body. He triumphs over all sorts of weaknesses and fears, grief and sorrow, pain and tribulations. He finds God by the practice of yoga, he gets union with the Lord by disciplining the mind and the senses. He lifts up his base wicked mind — which was running in old ruts and sensual grooves — to the highest pinnacle of divine glory and purity.

God-consciousness or communion with the Lord is the acme of the ethico-religious discipline of yoga. This is attended by a remarkable sense of freedom and moral elevation on account of the crumbling down of the false illusory little 'I'. The yogi is in possession of all divine powers. He enjoys unalloyed eternal bliss.

Those who practise concentration evolve quickly. They can do any work with scientific accuracy. What others take six hours to do can be done within half an hour by one who has concentration. What others can read within six hours, can be read by the yogi in half an hour. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Concentration helps a man in his material progress also. The man who practises concentration will have a very good out-turn of work in his office or business house. What was cloudy and hazy before becomes clear and definite. What was difficult before becomes easy now; and what was complex, bewildering and confusing before comes easily within the mental grasp. You can achieve anything through concentration. He who practises concentration will possess very good health and very clear mental vision, and nothing is impossible for him..

A raja yogi's vision is deeply penetrating because he has gathered all the dissipated rays of the mind by disciplining it through patient sadhana. He can get the full knowledge of either a distant or an internal object in the twinkling of an eye. His mind is like a powerful search-light. Just as the man in the pearl fishery dives deep and brings out the pearl, so also the mind of a raja yogi dives deep into an object and brings out its truth in a moment.

If a magnet is very powerful it will influence iron filings even when they are placed at a long distance. Even so, if the yogi is an advanced person he will have greater influence over the persons with whom he comes in contact. He can exert his influence on persons even when they live in a distant place.

A yogi who meditates regularly has a magnetic and charming personality. Those who come in contact with him are much influenced by his sweet voice, powerful speech, lustrous eyes, brilliant complexion, strong healthy body, good behaviour, virtuous qualities and divine nature. Just as a grain of salt when dropped in a basin of water becomes dissolved in water, just as sweet fragrance of jasmine pervades the air, so also the yogi's spiritual aura infiltrates into the minds of others. People draw joy, peace and strength from him. They are inspired by his speech and get elevation of mind by mere contact with him.

Yoga serves as the only solution to all universal problems. Without the differences of caste, creed and religious formalities, all can live in yoga with the Divine who abides in the heart of all beings.

The flame of yoga must burn brightly in your heart. Hold aloft the light of yoga, and contribute to the promotion of world peace and individual illumination.

Outline of Raja Yoga

***Yogas chitta vritti nirodhah**

Yoga is the suppression of the modifications of the mind-stuff. (I-2)

'Chitta' means 'mind-stuff' or subconscious mind. 'Vritti' means literally a 'whirlpool'. It is a thought-wave in the lake of chitta. Even so the mind gets modified into a vritti by actually assuming the form of the object it perceives. Knowledge of objects or perception is a kind of transformation of the mind.

Now comes the word 'nirodhah', which means restraint or suppression. 'By suppressing the modifications of the mind-stuff or restraining the thought-waves, a man obtains yoga'. Patanjali Maharishi has given the whole of raja yoga in this one sutra. Different methods of sadhana are intended to achieve the highest stage of yoga, asamprajnata samadhi, by the suppression of thought-waves. The yogi tries to stop all the vrittis. He tries to make the mind blank. He tries to stop thinking. He practises thoughtlessness. He stops the mind from assuming various forms. This is called 'chitta vritti nirodhah'. This is the path of raja yoga. Suppression of thought-waves is easily said, but it is very difficult indeed to practice.

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* The precepts of raja yoga were compiled by Patanjali in the form of 'sutras' or terse verses. A sutra is an aphoristic saying which is pregnant with deep hidden significance. Some of these sutras (with commentary) are included in the following chapters.

> *Then, the seer rests in his own nature.* (I-3)

When the lake is in a boisterous state on account of turbulent waves you can hardly see the bottom of the lake. When the waves subside you can clearly see the bottom of the lake. Even so when the mind is in an agitated condition on account of various vrittis, you can hardly rest in your own nature. You cannot see or realise your own Self. But when the vrittis subside you can rest in your own state. You do not identify yourself with the vrittis now.

Yoga is a complete suppression of the tendency of the mind to transform itself into objects, thoughts, etc. It demands continuous and steady practice. Then comes unlimited strength, peace, bliss and knowledge.

> *To a man of discrimination, everything here is misery only.* (II-15)

Raja yoga is the royal road to freedom from misery. It treats of the four great principles: misery, its cause, freedom from misery and the means. The practice of the methods prescribed in raja yoga leads to the cessation of all miseries and the attainment of eternal bliss.

Patanjali's raja yoga sutras are divided into four chapters. The first is samadhi pada. Then comes sadhana pada which describes the various practices of raja yoga. Then comes the vibhuti pada — by concentration you get various psychic powers which are described in this. The fourth is the kaivalya pada, which describes how you attain immortality and become one with the Supreme.

The path of raja yoga is based on careful observation, correct interpretation and practical application. It is an exact science.

> *There are eight limbs in raja yoga: yama (ethics), niyama (moral disciplines), asana (postures), pranayama (control of breath), pratyahara (sense withdrawal), dharana (concentration), dhyana (meditation) and samadhi.* (II-28,29)

Where hatha yoga ends, there raja yoga begins. Hatha yoga starts with asana and pranayama, control of the physical body and purification or regulation of breath. Raja yoga begins with control of the mind and ends in asamprajnata samadhi.

The eight limbs of raja yoga should be practised in the order given. You will not be benefited if you take to the practice of asana and pranayama without practising yama and niyama. If you want to take up a M.Sc. course you will have to start from the infant standard, pass through the different stages of first standard, second standard and so on, and then enter the college course. Even so you will have to go stage by stage, step by step, in the yoga courses also.

All methods of yoga have ethical training and moral perfection as their basis. The eradication of vices and the development of certain virtues form the first step in the ladder of yoga. Discipline of your nature and the formation of a steady and pure character through a set of right habits and daily observances is the next step. These are yama and niyama in raja yoga. The acquiring of the four means of liberation by the neophyte on the path of knowledge, the insistence upon self-consecration for the devotee and desirelessness and sacrifice for the karma yogi have as their aim the development of character and ethical perfection. Thus the ringing in of a new world-order of love and sacrifice, of co-operation and brotherhood and the realisation of the ideals of universal perfection can be effected by a willing unreserved allegiance to even the initial stages of yoga. Upon this firm foundation of a well-established and virtuous character is built the further structure of raja yoga.

The inherent restlessness of the mind constitutes the greatest problem to the follower of yoga. By its very nature the mind is ever outgoing. Also it is always unsteady. The resolute turning away from earthly attachment, the determined effacement of the ego, deliberate stoppage of all inharmonious processes and the constant dwelling upon a single idea require a firm control of the mind and the conscious direction of its powers towards the desired end.

The greatest external manifestation of the mental impulses is physical action. Actions when repeated crystallise into habits. In course of time habits, through indulgence, get incorporated as definite traits in the individual's personality. The plan of yoga science in obtaining mastery over the mind proceeds step by step, systematically, regulating and controlling first the grosser and then the subtler manifestations.

The inherent urge to activity is checked through asanas. By the practice of a system of steady postures the tendency to aimless and unrestrained movements is overcome. Character is developed, ennobling traits acquired, old habits overcome and replaced by new ones, activity checked and regulated; then the vagaries of the mind are restrained by a control of its counterpart, namely the breath. This stage is pranayama.

Though thoughts are checked, the mind yet continues to agitate in the form of desires and cravings. Thus the fifth limb of yoga is the withdrawal of all centripetal senseward movements of the desire-element in the mind, turning away from the external world and withdrawing the senses from the objects. Pratyahara paves the way for the sixth rung in the yogic ladder — dharana or contraction of the mind at a single point. The indrawn mind is made to fix upon any given idea or image, technically referred to as lakshya or object of meditation. Concentration deepened and lengthened becomes meditation (dhyana). When meditation is intensified and made continuous, samadhi results. A state of blissful union with the infinite spirit gives freedom from the thraldom of birth and death.

This transcendental experience transforms one into a being endowed with cosmic vision, beholding everywhere a divine unity behind apparent diversity. Henceforth the entire life becomes a spontaneous expression of the unhindered flow of supreme energy through every act. One lives and acts purely for the welfare of humanity, carrying on the divine plan to its glorious consummation.

Practice

Study carefully the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. Engage yourself in the service of the poor and the sick. Do simple pranayama for two years as described in this book. Control the senses. Destroy all vain desires and material ambitions. When desires crop up do not try to fulfil them. This is a great secret.

Destroy all thoughts, desires, fancies, whims, caprices, appetites, moods, wrong samskaras, superstitions and impulses. Be under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher. Watch the mind and its impressions very carefully all the twenty-four hours. Sit in your asana. Pray. Do mental worship.

Practise non-attachment. Make the mind blank. Do not allow any thoughts to crop up. Drive them away immediately. Do not think of anything. When there is no thought there is no desire. Desire is the product of past evil actions produced by contact and is the outcome of thoughts when they associate with objects. When thoughts cease to exist, desire will also cease. Thoughts and desires co-exist. By constant intense and protracted practise you are bound to succeed in controlling all thoughts. You will attain the state of highest knowledge and bliss.

You can definitely become a raja yogi within two or three years if you do earnest, intense sadhana with zeal, interest and enthusiasm. I solemnly make this bold assertion.

Who is a Yogi?

Yoga students are classified into three degrees or classes, the first (yogarudha), the second (yunjana) and the third (arurukshu). Yogarudha is one who has climbed the highest summit of the hill of yoga, who has finished all the preliminary practices, i.e. yama, niyama, asana, pranayama and pratyahara, in his previous births. He at once takes to meditation in this birth. He is established in the highest asamprajnata samadhi. He belongs to the first class. Sadasiva Brahman of Nerur (South India) and Jnana Dev of Alandi near Poona belonged to this class of yogins. Yunjana is one who has become deeply engaged in the practice of yoga. He belongs to the second class. Arurukshu is one who is attempting to climb the steps of yoga. He belongs to the third class.

To the three types of aspirants raja yoga prescribes three kinds of sadhana. To the first-class aspirant raja yoga prescribes practice and dispassion. He practises meditation on the Self; he practises chitta-vritti-nirodhah, and soon enters into samadhi.

To the middling aspirant raja yoga prescribes austerity (tapas), study (svadhyaya) and surrender to God (Ishvarapranidhana). Tapas is of various kinds: standing in the ice-cold water throughout the night in winter; standing on the burning sands throughout the day in summer — these and many other practices form austerity. Svadhyaya is study of spiritual literature and also japa of your mantra. Ishvarapranidhana is self-surrender to the Lord and doing all actions as an offering to God. These three form the sadhanas of the middle type of aspirant who enters into deep meditation very soon and attains liberation.

To the lowest kind of aspirant raja yoga prescribes the eight-fold practice of ethics, moral disciplines, asana, pranayama, sense-control, concentration, meditation and samadhi.

Do not imagine that you are a first-class aspirant and that you have only to sit in meditation and enter into samadhi. You will have a terrible downfall; even after years of practice you will find you have not progressed an inch forward because there are, deep within you, lurking desires and cravings, evil vrittis which are far beyond your reach. Be humble, make searching analysis of your heart and mind. Even if you are really a first-class aspirant, think you are an aspirant of the lowest class and practise the eight-fold practice prescribed by raja yoga. The more time you spend in the first two steps of yama and niyama the less will be needed to attain perfection in meditation. It is the preparation that takes very long. But do not wait for perfection in yama and niyama before taking up the higher practices of asana, pranayama and meditation. Try to get established in yama and niyama, and at the same time practise asana, pranayama and meditation as much as you can. The two must go hand in hand. Then success will be rapid. You will soon enter into nirvikalpa samadhi and attain liberation. What that supreme state is no one has expressed, and no words can describe.

Karma, Bhakti and Jnana in Raja Yoga

All the yogas are interblended, just as there is a blend in tea-leaves. There is no such thing as a separate karma yoga in Madras, bhakti yoga in Almora and raja yoga in Bombay. In raja yoga itself you get austerity, self study and surrender to God. Austerity belongs to karma yoga, self-study to jnana yoga and surrender to God to bhakti yoga. In vedanta you get four kinds of spiritual effort which are nothing but ethics, moral disciplines and sense control of raja yoga. Sama (contentment) and dama (sense control) of vedanta are found in raja yoga also. The raja yogi's concentration (dharana) is called samadhana by the vedantin.

Man is a triune being. He has a hand, a heart and a head. Therefore, he must at one and the same time practise karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga; then only will there be integral development. Otherwise there will be lop-sided development. The yoga of synthesis is therefore very necessary. You must be able to work in the dynamic field of karma yoga; you must be able to sing the Lord's names and glories; you must be able to meditate deeply; and at the same time you must strive to realise the vedantic truths. Some vedantins feel that karma yoga and bhakti yoga are inferior. This is a sad mistake. Service is as important as vedanta. When you understand that there is only one Self in all beings, can you remain without serving all? You will understand that the whole world is your body. Sankara, Jesus and Buddha were all 'integral' yogis. They are our ideals. Sankara the great advaita vedantin was a bhakta; he sang several hymns. He was a yogi, too; he was able to separate himself from his body. He was a dynamic karma yogi; within the short span of 32 years that he lived here he established four maths in different parts of India, when there was no aeroplane or motor-car. He was a great jnani at the same time. He practised the yoga of synthesis.

In yoga there are two paths through which to realise the Self — the ant path and the bird path. Just as the ant slowly marches, so also the aspirant slowly marches in the spiritual path. He practises karma yoga to purify his heart and then takes up worship to steady his mind. Finally, he treads the path of jnana yoga and eventually reaches the goal of life. This is the ant path. Just as the bird flies at once, so also the aspirant of the first-class type at once practises jnana yoga and attains knowledge of the Self. This is the bird path. The student of yoga first concentrates on muladhara chakra, then on svadhisthana, then on manipura and finally on ajna chakra. He moves step by step. This is the ant path. Another student at once concentrates on ajna chakra or sahasrara. This is the bird path.

A student of bhakti yoga should possess great power of imagination and abundant pure emotion. A student of jnana yoga should be endowed with the power of reflection, ratiocination and enquiry, and should possess abundant serenity, calmness and tranquillity.

Jnana (wisdom) attained through books without yoga (direct intuitive perception) is useless. Yoga (mere knowledge of asanas, mudras and cleansing techniques) without jnana (wisdom gained from personal spiritual experience) is not perfect. Jnana and yoga are the two wings of the hamsa bird (Brahman). Jnana arises through yoga (union with Brahman). Jnana is the fruit of bhakti.

According to peculiarities of spiritual temperaments, some prefer the path of jnana yoga with its threefold attributes of hearing, reflection and meditation; others prefer the path of bhakti yoga with its three steps of singing Lord's name (kirtan), adoration (bhajan) and utter submission (saranagati); while still others prefer the path of raja yoga with its three stages of concentration, meditation and samadhi.

There is a gold ring set with a precious diamond which is very small and fine. Gold is not so valuable as the diamond though it constitutes the body of the ring. The diamond of the ring is like the crest-jewel of the crown. It occupies a small space in the body of the ring, but it is very precious. Even so, the scriptures speak of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga — which are like the gold in the ring — but the actual spiritual experience or Self-realisation is like the subtle precious diamond fixed on the gold ring.

You should have knowledge of God. Then only you can love Him. You should approach saints and mahatmas and hear stories of God. Saints declare that there is an all-merciful, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God. You should study *Bhagavatam, Ramayana* and other religious books. Through hearing of scriptures and satsang come admiration, attraction, attachment and supreme love for the Lord. You cannot know Him without loving Him. There is love when you perform actions. You serve your brother, father, mother, teacher and friend with love. Without concentration (yoga) you cannot turn out good work. Without concentration you cannot love God. Without concentration you cannot know God. Therefore karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga are interblended. You cannot separate them. All these paths lead to the same goal.

This world is the play of the two small lenses of the eyes. When you close your eyes it dwindles into airy nothing. It is like the water in the mirage. Why do you bother much, then, in worldly affairs? Why do you entangle, then, in vain selfish activities?

Instead of weeping, do ploughing. There will be abundant rains on one day and you will have a rich harvest. Even so, be up and doing in yoga sadhana (practices) and you will attain supreme peace and eternal bliss one day.

SADHANA

The 'Sermon on the Mount' forms the kernel of the teachings of Lord Jesus. Live in the spirit of the teachings. The whole spiritual sadhana and the gist of the *Vedas* is there. Put it into practice in daily life. Every individual should cultivate that manner of life which will best lead him towards the attainment of his aspiration, viz., Self-realisation. Start in right earnest now, do not delay even a second. If you have youth, energy, dispassion and a pure heart you will doubtless succeed in your attempt.

It is not true that only one attained moksha or liberation and none else can. History bears evidence of many a Sankara having come into this world. If the past could produce Sankaras, why not the future also? What one has achieved can be achieved by others also. This is the immutable law of nature.

Renunciation of objects gives pain at the outset. If you struggle hard to tread the path, if you once make a strong determination and firm resolve it becomes very easy. You get interest and new joy. Your heart expands. You will have a broad outlook on life, a new wide vision. You will feel the help from the invisible hands of the indweller of your heart. Your doubts are cleared by themselves by getting answers from within. You can hear the shrill, sweet voice of God. There is indescribable thrill of divine ecstasy from within. There is deep, abiding, everlasting, undiminishing, undecaying, spiritual bliss. This gives new strength. The foot-hold on the path becomes firmer and firmer. Perfected masters and yogis lend a helping hand to the struggling aspirants. The aspirants actually feel this. The feeling of loneliness and of being neglected and forsaken vanishes.

A man who has not seen a certain famous swami hears all about the personality and the attributes of that swami from a man who actually has seen him and who knows him full well. He then tries to visualise a mental picture of him. Even so the aspirant should hear all about the invisible, hidden Brahman from the sages who have attained Self-realisation, and then meditate on the Atman or the Self.

Some experience glimpses of the transcendental wonders of Atman. Some are on the border-land of the vast domain of Atman. Some like Dattatreya, Jada Bharat, Nam Dev and Sadasiva Brahman have plunged deep in the ocean of bliss. The more the thinning of desires, egoism and false identification with the body, the greater the bliss of the Self. The more the practice, the more the experience of joy of the Soul.

The arduous practice of yoga demands an abundance of energy and nerve-power on the part of the yoga student. If one conserves the seminal energy he can have an abundance of energy and nerve-power.

The physical body is the holy shrine of God. It is the temple of the Lord. Keep it strong and healthy. Then only will you meet Him. Do not be carried away by false understanding. Take care of the body but have no attachment for it. Be prepared to give it up in a noble cause. This body is an instrument for attaining Self-realisation. You cannot meditate if you have a weak sickly body.

Do you want a spiritual pill or a talisman to get Self-realisation? Do you want spiritual powers to drop from heaven? Give up all these foolish ideas. You will have to do all the practice yourself. Don't weep like a widow, but stand up like a lion and do solid practice. Do not depend upon others. I will give you precious spiritual jewels. Wear them round your neck. Remember them. Put them in practice. Don't prattle like a child.

I believe in solid spiritual practice. I believe in thorough overhauling of worldly nature — worldliness of various sorts. We should become absolutely fearless. That is the sign of life in Atman. No more words, no more talk, no more argument, heated debates or discussions, no more study, no more wandering. Live in one place. Live in OM, live in truth. There is peace, silence and seclusion.

Enter the silence and enjoy the blissful state of samadhi.

You should have regular and systematic meditation, japa, study of *Bhagavad Gita*, *Upanishads* and *Viveka Chudamani*. Do not think: "I will study when I am alone without work in Uttarkashi (Himalayas)." That is wrong. That is foolishness. You must have the daily habit of meditation and study along with selfless service. That 'tomorrow' will never come. Make hay while the sun shines. Winnow the corn when the wind blows. It will be too late to gather honey in the winter. Apply yourself diligently now. Live unattached in the world. Seclusion, silence and silent meditation are necessary for spiritual growth. Prepare yourself gradually.

Shut yourself in a room for a month. Give up reading of newspapers. Reading of newspapers revives the impressions of the universe, agitates the mind, makes you emotional and sentimental and augments the restlessness of the mind. It makes you forget God.

Have two rooms, one for study and meditation and the other for bath and food. Never come out of the rooms. Spend the time in study and meditation. Do not write any letters. Cut off all connections. Now see whether the world exists or not. At least it will not exert such a deep impression as it did before. If you continue your meditation, and rest in the Self, this world will entirely disappear. It will be like a dream for you. It will not allure you.

Shake the bonds of karma through discrimination, dispassion and non-attachment. Know the secret of true bliss through concentration and meditation. Root out passion, embrace peace, enjoy the glory of self-bliss. Delight in the Self within.

Serve the sick, console the distressed. Live in God. Preach the gospel of love. Lead a life of self-sacrifice and service. Be pious and pure. This will lead you to the attainment of God-consciousness.

Keep company with evolved souls who tread the path of Truth. Always mark carefully what is going on in the inner factory. Give up all sorts of mean actions. Become a noble, magnanimous soul. Nobility is God. Magnanimity is Truth. If people mock at you, keep quiet. Never retort. Excuse them. Give a vedantic smile. Stand adamantine as yonder rock.

Even if the whole world opposes you, fear not. Never move a fraction of an inch from your firm resolve and determination. Stand up and proclaim the Truth. Even if the whole world leaves you, fear not. The Inner Ruler stands by your side in your heart. He is ever ready to help you. Open your heart to Him like a child. Speak to Him. He is the bestower of everything, of all bounties.

Purify yourself first. Then you can really purify the world. Reform your self first. Then you can really reform the world. You have got all the materials within you for transmuting yourself into a sage. A little application and rigorous meditation will ignite the spiritual dynamo within. Exert. Struggle. Plod. Ignite. Realise.

Four Letters from Lord Yama*

Beware of being deluded by the delights of the world. Wake up now. Lord Yama, in his mercy and compassion, sends four letters. Do you know what they are? The first letter is the appearance of grey hairs. Lord Yama warns: "Oh man, you have wasted your life. Old age is approaching you. Your life will soon come to an end. Wake up now and apply yourself to spiritual practices." But man ignores it and goes to the chemist and gets a pigment to colour the hairs black. He goes on as before. He wants to show that he is superior to Lord Yama. The second letter arrives. His eye-sight grows dim. There is yet chance for him to wake up and apply himself to yoga practices; but he does not. He goes to the eye specialist and puts on beautiful spectacles. Even after that he continues to lead the same sensual life. In the spectacles he feels he appears even more presentable than otherwise! (Even some youngsters wear spectacles nowadays; they think it is a fashionable thing to do and that they look more beautiful with them. Don't entertain such foolish ideas. You will only spoil your eyes.) And then the third letter comes. Teeth begin to fall. This is a very serious warning from Yama. But the deluded man does not care even now. He goes to the dentist and has a beautiful set of artificial teeth made for him. Now he is even more happy: "My natural teeth were not so good as these," he says. He does not care to take the warning of Yama. Then the fourth letter arrives. Limbs lose their vigour. He has a tottering gait. He cannot sit erect or walk unaided. But foolish man does not realise that his life is nearing its end. He goes to the shop, purchases a beautiful walking stick and puts a silver cap on it — he looks even smarter with it than without! Alas, all the four warnings of the Lord go unheeded. Finally, he is snatched away by death.

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* The Lord of Death

Such is the miserable condition of the ignorant man. Be not like him. Wake up now. There is still time for you. Do sadhana. Realise the goal here and now.

Be Regular

Every effort in the spiritual path, any sort of spiritual practice, never goes in vain. The fruit of sadhana cannot come immediately. The Supreme has to be attained gradually. You will have to wait for a long time patiently. Spiritual evolution is gradual. Do not become impatient. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Lord says: "*He who is perfected in yoga finds it in the Self in due season.*" (IV-38). Mark the words 'in due season'.

You will have to ascend the ladder of yoga step by step. If there are mangoes on the top of a big tree you do not jump all at once to pluck them. It is impossible. You gradually climb up the tree by getting hold of different branches and then reach the top of the tree. Even so, you cannot jump all at once to the summit of the spiritual ladder. You will have to practise yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. Then only you will reach the highest rung of the ladder of yoga — samadhi.

If you remain even for a minute without doing spiritual practice it is the highest sin. Have iron determination to stick to the spiritual path and realise the Truth in this very birth. Method and discipline are necessary in work. Then only will you have efficient turn-out. Nothing will come out of chaos. O aspirants! Be very serious and earnest in your devotional practices. Run now to the feet of God.

Just as the physical body needs food for its growth, so also the astral or subtle body requires spiritual food in the shape of prayers, japa, kirtan, meditation, etc. for its growth or evolution. Just as you are agitated when you do not get your food in time, so also you will be agitated when you do not pray in the morning and in the evening, at the proper time, if you keep up the practice of prayer and japa for some time. The subtle body also wants its food at the proper time. The food for the subtle body is more essential than the food for the body. Therefore do your prayers, japa and meditation regularly. If you are not regular the subtle body will become weak and your power of resisting evil thoughts, desires and tendencies will be less.

Some sadhaks do constant sadhana in a mild manner; some do intense sadhana for two hours in the morning and two hours in the night. If you want to attain Self-realisation quickly, you must do intense and constant sadhana for a protracted period. Doing by fits and starts is useless.

If you study one chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* daily, if you do two malas of japa daily, if you observe two fasts in a month, if you meditate for half an hour daily, you have done much in one year. The spiritual impressions (samskaras) are there in the sub-conscious mind. They are indestructible. They will coalesce and form a spiritual bridge — the bridge of Brahman — through which you can cross to the other shore of fearlessness and immortality in a short time.

If there is slackness and irregularity in the practices, a fit of passion or worldliness may blow away the little good result which the yoga student has achieved and it will be very difficult for him to rise again to the original heights he has climbed. That is the reason why one has to do arduous practice of yoga till he is established in the highest samadhi. That yogi who has controlled his mind through the arduous practice of yoga for several years will be able to cognise the immutable Reality that is behind this empirical existence or the world of names and forms. That is the reason why Patanjali Maharishi also says:

> *Practice becomes fixed, steady, when practised for a long*
> *time, without any break and with perfect devotion.* (I-14)

O impatient aspirants! Be patient. You will get everything when the time comes. Do your practice and austerity (tapas) systematically and regularly. Just as the gardener who waters the trees daily gets the fruits only when the time comes, so also you will enjoy the fruits of your sadhana when the time comes. Purify and steady the mind now. Purify the nerves also. In the *Bhagavad Gita* the Lord says: "*Little by little let him gain tranquillity, by steady and regular practice.*" (VI-25)

Difficulties in Sadhana

This world is full of difficulties and troubles. No one, save a yogi or a bhakta or a jnani, is free from worldly troubles and miseries. Go wherever you like. It is all the same. Kashmir is a lovely place; but fleas bite at night. Man does not get any sleep. Uttarkashi in the Himalayas is a good place for meditation. It has good spiritual vibrations; but peculiar fleas bite. They cause severe itching, bleeding and inflammation. Deva Prayag in the Himalayas is a very good place; but there are horrible scorpions. There is sunstroke at Benares. You get pneumonia and dysentery in Badrinath. Develop the power of endurance. Lead a life of renunciation and dispassion. Then only can you be happy in any part of the world.

How can you please the world? There are so many tongues, so many talks, so many opinions, so many remarks. This world is a strange mixture of sattva, rajas and tamas. Tamasic people are in abundance. Their nature is to find fault always and pass unnecessary criticism. Therefore, follow the dictates of your own conscience and the prompting of your own soul. If you are satisfied, the whole world must be satisfied.

In the spiritual path you must be prepared to meet with hundreds of failures, innumerable difficulties and obstacles. In the beginning it may appear to be very hard, thorny, precipitous and slippery. It is the razor path. To walk on this path is like walking on the edge of a sharp razor. You will fall down several times but if you are sincere and earnest in your practice you will rise up quickly and walk again with more zeal, boldness and cheerfulness. Every stumbling block will become a stepping stone to success or ascent on the hill of spiritual knowledge. Every fall will give you additional strength to rise up to a greater height on the ladder of yoga. Do not lose sight of the goal. Do not miss the ideal. Do not be discouraged. You will soon get spiritual strength from within. The indweller will guide you and push you up.

Trials are for strengthening the aspirants and for their rapid spiritual growth. One will grow quickly if one can adapt himself to any kind of environment and circumstance. If God gives trials, side by side He also gives new strength, patience and fortitude to bear the trials. There is no room for lamentation then. Say once more: "Thy will be done." All saints and sages, all prophets and seers, had to pass through tremendous struggles and severe ordeals before they reached the goal. March boldly and reach the goal.

Your spiritual growth is gauged by the extent of your victory over external circumstances and environments, troubles and difficulties, adverse conditions and antagonistic influences. A yogi or a sage always keeps a balanced mind in all conditions of life and at every moment. He is adamantine because he stands on a firm basis — the eternal, unchanging, immortal Soul — and so he is called steadfast. Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: "*The man whom these torment not, O chief of men, balanced in pain and pleasure, steadfast, he is fit for immortality.*" (*Bhagavad Gita* (II-15).

Do not go to extremes such as mauna, fasting, etc. Keep up the golden medium. Lord Buddha did rigorous austerities in the beginning. This affected his body much. Later on he learnt to keep up the golden medium. Do not spoil your health. Rigorous asceticism is not required for the attainment of the 'final beatitude' of life. It is simply a foolish torture of the human body. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "*The men who perform severe austerities unenjoined by the scriptures, wedded to vanity and egoism, impelled by the force of their desires and passions, unintelligent, tormenting the aggregated elements forming the body, and Me also, seated in the inner body, know these to be demonical in their resolves.*" (XVII-5,6)

Necessity for a Guru

"*If these truths have been told to a high souled one who has supreme devotion to God and as much devotion to his guru or preceptor as to God, then only they will shine forth, then only they will shine forth indeed.*" (*Svetasvatara Upanishad:* (VI-23)

The spiritual path is thorny, rugged and precipitous. It is enveloped by darkness. The guidance of a guru who has already trodden the path is imperative.

Some do meditation for some years independently. Later on, they actually feel the necessity of a guru. They come across some obstacles in the way. They do not know how to proceed further and how to obviate these impediments or stumbling blocks. Then they begin to search for a master. A stranger in a big city finds it difficult to go back to his residence in a small avenue even in broad daylight, even though he has walked half a dozen times. When difficulty arises even in the case of finding out the way in streets and roads, what to speak of the difficulties in the razor path of spirituality when one walks alone with closed eyes!

The guru will be able to throw light and remove the obstacles on the path. The knowledge of the Self is handed down from guru to disciple in succession. Matsyendranath taught it to Nivrittinath.

Nivrittinath gave the knowledge to Jnana Dev, and so on. Gaudapada initiated Govindapada into the mysteries of Kaivalyam. Govindapada instructed Sankaracharya. Sankaracharya instructed Suresvaracharya, and so on.

The spiritual path is quite a different line altogether. It is not like writing a thesis for M.A. examination. The help of a teacher is necessary at every moment. Young aspirants become self-sufficient, arrogant and self-assertive in these days. They do not care to carry out the orders of a guru. They do not wish to have a guru. They want independence from the very beginning. They apply in an absurd manner with a perverted intellect the 'neti neti' (not this, not this) doctrine in the case of guru also. They think they are in the fourth state of consciousness when they do not even know the A.B.C. of spirituality or truth. This is the philosophy of devils. They mistake licentiousness or 'having their own way and sweet will' for freedom. This is a serious, lamentable mistake. That is the reason why they do not grow. They lose faith in the efficacy of their practice and in the existence of God. They wander about in a happy-go-lucky manner, without any aim, from Kashmir to Gangotri and from Gangotri to Rameshvaram talking some nonsense on the way, and posing as liberated beings.

He who lives under the guidance of a guru for twelve years, who carries out implicitly the orders of the guru, who serves the guru sincerely, taking him for God himself, can really improve in the spiritual path. There is no other way for spiritual progress. So long as there is world, there are spiritual teachers and spiritual books. The number of liberated beings may be less in Kali Yuga than in Satya Yuga. If you cannot get an ideal guru, you can take even a senior aspirant who has been treading the path of realisation for some years, who is straightforward and honest, who is selfless, free from pride and egoism, who has good character and who has knowledge of scriptures, as your guru. Live with him for some time. Study him carefully. If you are satisfied, take him as your preceptor and follow his instructions strictly. After you have accepted him once as your guru, never suspect him and never find fault with him. Also, do not change the guru very often. You will be bewildered. You will get different conflicting ideas. Everybody has got his own method of spiritual practice. You will find no improvement if you change your method frequently. Stick to one guru and stick to his instructions.

Stick to one method. You will evolve quickly. Single-minded devotion to one guru, to one ideal and to one kind of sadhana and whole-hearted application, are indispensable requisites for God-realisation.

If an aspirant from Kashmir meditates upon his guru or spiritual guide at Uttarkashi, Himalayas, a definite connection is established between him and the teacher. The guru radiates power, peace, joy and bliss to the student in response to his thoughts. He is bathed in the powerful current of magnetism. The stream of spiritual electricity flows steadily from the preceptor to his disciple, just as oil flows from one vessel to another. The student can imbibe or draw from his teacher in proportion to his degree of faith. Whenever the student sincerely meditates upon his teacher, the teacher also actually feels that a current of prayer or sublime thoughts proceeds from his student and it touches his heart. He who has the inner astral sight can clearly visualise a thin stream of bright light between the disciple and the teacher, caused by the movement of the vibration of pure thoughts in the ocean of consciousness.

Beware of pseudo-gurus. They are knocking about in abundance these days. They will exhibit some tricks or feats to attract people. Think that those who are proud, who are roaming about to make disciples and to amass money, who talk of worldly matters, who speak untruth, who boast of themselves, who are talkative, who keep company with worldly people and women and who are luxury-loving, are false imposters. Do not be deceived by their sweet talk and lectures.

In this connection, it will not be out of place to mention the story of a man who was in search of a sad-guru. He found out after all, one sad-guru. The student asked the guru: "O venerable sir, give me some instruction."

The guru asked: "What sort do you want?"

The disciple asked: "O beloved master! Who is superior, disciple or guru?"

The guru said: "Guru is superior to disciple."

The disciple said: "O beloved guru! Make me a guru. I would like that."

Such sort of disciples are plenty in these days.

Three Things

Here are some triads for your daily spiritual practices.

Practise three things: non-violence, truthfulness and celibacy.

Remember three things: death, pains of worldly existence (samsara) and God.

Renounce three things: egoism, desire and attachment.

Cultivate three things: humility, fearlessness and love.

Eradicate three things: lust, anger and greed.

Three things to love: desire for liberation, company of the wise and selfless service.

Three things to despise: miserliness, cruelty and petty-mindedness.

Three things to admire: generosity, courage and nobility.

Three things to hate: lust, anger and pride.

Three things for reverence: guru, renunciation and discrimination.

Three things to control: tongue, temper and tossing of the mind.

Three things to shun: evil company, evil desires and evil actions.

Three things to cultivate: cosmic love, forgiveness and patience.

Three things to avoid: back-biting, falsehood and harsh words.

MYSTERIES OF THE MIND

Though objects are similar, the ways of mind are different according to the difference in minds. (IV-15)

The form which the infinite all-pervading Atman has assumed through its power of imagination is called 'mind'. Raja yoga is an exact science concerned with the mind and the suppression of all its modifications. Because the mind is the cause for the existence of the phenomenal world, its annihilation will eventually lead the yoga practitioner to the highest goal i.e., asamprajnata samadhi, wherein he rests in complete peace in union with the Supreme Soul.

The practice of raja yoga will enable you to possess a vigorous healthy mind, strong will-power and wonderful power of concentration and self-control. It will enable you to acquire various psychic powers.

Every human being has within himself various potentialities and capacities. He is a magazine of power and knowledge. Through this path he can become the master of internal and external nature. He can unfold new powers, new faculties, new qualities. He can change his environment and influence others. He can subdue other minds. He can enter into super-conscious state. He can govern all the phenomena of nature — he can control the elements. The whole mystery of nature will be unravelled to him.

Raja yoga deals in detail with the process of restraining the vrittis (waves of the mind) and attaining nirvikalpa samadhi or the state of super-consciousness in which the samskaras (the seeds of rebirth) are fried in toto. The yogi attains perfection or kaivalya — independence.

The earnest student of the science of raja yoga will find a wealth of occult lore in the book on raja yoga written by Patanjali Maharishi. The book contains aphorisms or laconic sutras. (Without the help of an explanatory commentary and a master who has actually mastered all the yoga practices, it is rather difficult to comprehend the teachings contained in this book.)

Nature of the Mind

Mind is a power born of Atman because it is through mind that God manifests Himself as the differentiated universe of names and forms. Mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts and habits. As the 'I' thought is the root of all thoughts, mind is only the thought 'I'.

Mind is nothing but a collection of samskaras or impressions. It is nothing but a collection of desires arising from contact with different objects. It is also a collection of feelings aroused by worldly botherations. It is a collection of ideas gathered from different objects. These desires, ideas and feelings constantly change. Some of the old desires are constantly departing from their store-house of the mind, and new ones are replacing them.

Mind is the greatest force on this earth. He who has controlled his mind is full of powers, he can bring all minds under his influence. All diseases can be cured by psychic healing. One is struck with awe and wonder at the marvels and mysterious powers of the mind of man. The source or home or support for this mysterious mind is God or Atman.

Mind is a mysterious something which is really nothing but does everything. It is born of the illusory power of God. It is a product of ignorance. It is a compound of desires, thoughts and imagination, a mixture of worry and fear. It is a confection.

If you pant for breath or feel tired even when you walk a short distance it indicates that you are physically weak. If you feel tired when you study a book for a short while it denotes that something which is inside the body is weak. That 'something' which is inside the body, which becomes weak when you study, is the 'mind' or thinking principle. This clearly proves that mind exists.

Mind feels tired after hard and protracted work. It cannot, therefore, be the Atman. The Atman is the storehouse of all powers.

Mind is only an instrument of the Atman. It should be properly disciplined. Just as you develop the physical body through gymnastics and various kinds of physical exercises, you have to train the mind through mental training, mental culture or mental drill — for instance the training of memory, the cultivation of reflection, discrimination and enquiry of 'Who am I?'. The practice of meditation itself is a potent clarifier of memory. The practice of memory-culture powerfully helps the attainment of meditation.

Mind is the instrument or sense which is the cause for the feelings of pleasure and pain. It is countless as it remains with each soul. It is in the form of an atom and is eternal.

The mind is like the sensitive plate of a camera. Just as the picture of a man who comes in front of a camera is impressed on the sensitive plate behind, so also the images of all objects of the world are indelibly printed in the mind. The book that you see in front of you is a mental image plus an external something. In fact the whole external world is within the mind. The mind has projected this world from itself, just as the spider has projected the web from its own body. The mind manifests itself as the external world. The things that we perceive all around us are only mind in form or substance. The mind is subjectively consciousness and is objectively this universe.

Just as the physical body is composed of solid, liquid and gaseous matter, so also the mind is made up of subtle matter of various grades of density with different rates of vibration. A raja yogi penetrates through the different layers of the mind by intense practice.

Mind can be compared to water. Water exists in four states, viz., causal state in the form of H_2O, subtle state in the form of water, gross state in the form of ice and gaseous state in the form of vaporised steam. Even so, the mind is in a gross state during waking state when it enjoys sensual objects, it is in a subtle state when it functions in the dream state, it is in a causal state when it gets involved into its cause during deep sleep and it evaporates as gas when it melts or dissolves in Brahman during nirvikalpa samadhi.

When rice has its own individuality it can be differentiated. When it is powdered nicely and made into a thick paste, rice loses its individuality. It is all one mass of homogeneous paste. Even so, in deep sleep state mind is like the rice paste. There is no differentiation here. It is a homogeneous mass.

Ghee has two states, viz., solid and liquid. Mind is like ghee; in the waking state it is solid and in deep sleep state it is liquid. In the solid state it is limited and gross and so it has finite experiences. In the liquid state it is limitless and so the jiva experiences the homogeneous, limitless bliss. In the deep sleep state there is no ego or individuality. There is no desire also. Hence, it experiences limitless bliss of Atman.

Mind is formed out of the subtlest portion of food. It is not a heavy thing. It is like a light diffusable gas or vapour or fume. When a scented stick is burnt the fumes pervade the whole room in a minute. Even so, the mind pervades the whole brain as soon as it emerges out of the causal body from deep sleep.

Some philosophers say that the size of the mind corresponds to the size of the body with which it is connected, and that it contracts and expands like a light placed in a jar or a house, as the case may be. This is wrong. The flame of the light neither increases nor decreases, contracts nor expands according to the space. So also the mind remains the same always. The mind, therefore, is all-pervading and subtle.

The vast universe shines as the thought or imagination of the Self (atma-sankalpa). Only if there is mind will this universe exist. There is no mind during deep sleep. So there is no world. The more you think of the objects, the more this world will appear to you as real. The conception of the reality of the universe will increase if you think of sensual objects often and often. If all the thoughts are eliminated there remains nothing which can be called mind. So thoughts are the mind. Again, there is no such thing as world, independent of and apart from thoughts.

All duality is of the mind. The whole of duality is caused by the imagination of the mind. If all imaginations are withdrawn into the mind itself by constant practice of discrimination, dispassion, contentment, self-control and concentration, you will not experience the dual universe. The mind will become no-mind. As it has nothing to cognise, it will rest in the source, the Atman.

The mind is single, but through the power of illusion it appears to be dual in the dreaming state as the perceiver and the perceived. The mind itself takes the form of a rose, mountain, elephant, river, ocean, enemy etc.

Just as heat is inseparable from fire, so also fluctuation is inseparable from mind. It makes the mind restless. This fluctuation is caused by the power of rajas. It is the fluctuation that causes absence of peace of mind. The bhaktas remove this tossing by repetition of a mantra and devout meditation.

The power of fluctuation is itself the mind. This fluctuating mind alone is this world. The mind becomes no-mind if fluctuation disappears. The mind ceases to exist if it becomes destitute of this fluctuation. What is called the illusory power of the Lord (maya) is this fluctuating potency of the mind. Mind does havoc through the power of fluctuation. It is this fluctuation that brings about the downfall of a struggling aspirant. Destroy this fluctuation through strong discrimination (viveka) constant meditation and ceaseless Brahma vichara (enquiry into Brahman).

As soon as the fluctuation manifests itself, various sorts of imaginations crop up. Imagination co-exists with fluctuation. Imagination is as dangerous as fluctuation. Fluctuation moves the mind, imagination fattens the mind. Minus fluctuation and imagination, mind is a mere zero. Fluctuation and imagination are the two wings of the mind-bird. Cut the right wing through enquiry of the Atman and the left wing through the practice of thoughtlessness. The great bird — mind — will fall dead on the spot immediately.

The one dividing wall between the soul and the body is mind. If this wall is broken by ceaseless enquiry of the Atman the individual soul (jiva) mixes with the Supreme Soul, just as the river mixes with the ocean.

In a dark room, if a pot containing a lamp inside it is broken, the darkness of the room is dispelled and you see light everywhere in the room. Even so, if the body-pot is broken through constant meditation on the self, i.e., if you destroy ignorance and its effect (such as identification with the body) and rise above body-consciousness, you will cognise the supreme light of the Atman everywhere.

Close your eyes. Meditate. Open your heart to the inflow of the invisible power. You will find in the *Bible*: "*Empty thyself, I will fill thee.*" You will have abundant, super-intuitional knowledge which is beyond the reach of intellect. Just as water freely flows when the tap is turned, so also divine wisdom will flow freely when the obstacles of ignorance that stand in the way of knowledge are removed. You will get flashes of divine inspiration, revelation and intuition. You will have to put yourself in a state of quietude by silencing all bubbling thoughts and emotions and connect the mind with the Source by withdrawing the mind from sensual objects, just as you do with a telephone when you turn the switch off and connect the two persons who want to speak.

When your business fails or you are in heavy grief due to the death of your only son you get emaciation of body even though you eat nourishing substantial food. You feel tremendous internal weakness. When a lady is deeply engaged in the management of the affairs of her daughter's marriage she forgets to take her food. She is always happy. Her heart is full of joy. The joy and cheerfulness are powerful tonics for her mind. She gets inner mental strength although she does not take any food. This clearly proves that mind exists and that cheerfulness is good mental food.

Change of thought, relaxation of mind by dwelling on thoughts of pleasant objects, cheerfulness, pure food and mental recreation of pure nature are necessary for mental health.

Mind is everything. Mind can make a hell into a heaven and a heaven into a hell. Keep this monkey-mind under proper control; then alone you can be really happy. Mind creates and destroys. It creates the whole universe by its power of imagination. The chief characteristic of the mind is imagination. It is the creator and enjoyer of all happiness and misery. It is the cause for bondage and liberation. Mind is all. It is everything. It is your true friend and bad enemy. The impure mind is your enemy. It causes various sorts of attachment. It is filled with various base desires and appetites. The highest mind is a rare friend and benefactor because it imparts true counsel in the way of obtaining the supreme goal of life. The higher mind becomes your guiding guru. Hear its sweet, small voice and follow its instruction. The voice of the pure mind is the voice of God. It is an infallible voice. In the *Bhagavad Gita* you will find: "*A man should uplift himself by his own self, so let him not weaken the self. For, this self is the friend of oneself and the self is the enemy of oneself. The self is the friend of oneself for him who has conquered the self, the self is inimical (and behaves) like (an external) foe for him who has not conquered the self.*" (VI-5,6)

There is no other vessel on this earth to cross the ocean of worldly existence (samsara) than the mastery of the lower instinctive mind.

Mind always attaches itself to something objective. It cannot stand by itself. It gropes in darkness. It forgets. It is changing every second. If food is withdrawn for a couple of days, it cannot think properly. There is no functioning of the mind during deep sleep. It is full of impurities, desires and cravings. It gets puzzled during anger. In fear, it trembles. In shock, it sinks. How can you take the mind then as the pure Self?

A writer writes many books with the help of the fountain pen. The fountain pen is only an instrument of the writer. The fountain pen should not think: "I have written all these books, all the credit should come to me only." Your mind, senses and the body are only instruments in the hands of the Lord. God does everything: feel like this and abandon the doership or the agency. You will be freed from the bonds of karma.

A son inherits only the physical characteristics of his father, not the mental traits. The son has his own thoughts, temperament, tendencies, mental aptitude, mental traits, etc. A man with musical tendencies may get his birth in the house of a renowned musician in order to get favourable conditions for his further growth in the art of music. This does not mean that he has inherited his musical tendencies from the father.

Mind has got various preconceptions. When an artist begins to draw a picture on the canvas he draws the picture out of the materials preconceived by the mind. Any action that is done by the physical body is the outcome of a preconceived idea. The mind thinks, plans and schemes at first. Then the action manifests itself. For instance, he who invented a watch at first had all ideas in his mind about the construction of the lever, various wheels, dial, minute-hand, second-hand, hour-hand, etc. These ideas materialised later on into action.

The best philosophers and seers (rishis and sages) are unanimously agreed that the mind cannot actually attend to more than one thing at a time. Two thoughts, however closely related to one another, cannot exist at the same time. You cannot attend to two different objects at a time. Mind can do only one thing at a time. Because it moves with such a tremendous velocity backwards and forwards you think that the mind can attend to several objects or things at a time. You can only either see or hear at a time. You cannot see and hear at the same time. But this law is not applicable to a developed yogi. A developed yogi can do several things at a time because his will is not separate from the cosmic will which is all-powerful.

A speck of light presents the appearance of a continuous circle of light if it is made to rotate rapidly. Even so, though the mind can attend to one thing at a time (either hearing or seeing or smelling) and can admit one kind of sensation at a time, because it moves from one object to another with tremendous velocity there appears to be simultaneous activity.

You must train the mind properly and give it proper pure food for assimilation. Have a divine background of thought or mental image.

The mind becomes that on which it dwells. This is an immutable psychological law. If you begin to think about the defects of a man, for the time being at least your mind dwells on the bad qualities and becomes charged with these qualities, whether the man possesses these bad qualities or not. This may be your vain imagination only, because of your wrong thinking, wrong tendencies or wrong (bad) habits of the mind. He may not possess even a bit of the bad qualities which you have superimposed on him through ill-will or some form of jealousy or petty-mindedness or habitual fault-finding nature. Therefore give up the dangerous habit of censuring others and finding faults in others. Praise others. Develop the power or vision of finding only good in others. Do not bark like a wild dog about the bad qualities of others. Glorify others. You will grow spiritually. You will be liked, honoured and respected by others.

A mind always hopeful, confident, courageous and determined on its set purpose and keeping itself to that purpose, attracts to itself, out of the elements, things and powers favourable to that purpose.

Diversities or heterogeneities which you notice in this world are of mental creation. When the mind is annihilated by destruction of thoughts, desires and egoism, all diversities vanish. Wisdom alone remains.

Just as the body exists for the enjoyment of the senses, just as the senses exist for the enjoyment of the mind, so also the mind exists for the enjoyment of the Self (Purusha). Just as the house which has assumed its shape as such by various materials being brought together exists for the enjoyment of another, so also this compound mind exists for the enjoyment of the Purusha.

Just as there are doors in a bungalow between the outer and inner rooms, so also there are doors between the lower and higher mind. When the mind is purified by the practice of karma yoga, tapas, right conduct or the practice of yama, niyama, japa, meditation, etc., the doors between the lower and the higher mind are opened. Discrimination between the real and the unreal dawns. The eye of intuition is opened. The practitioner gets inspiration, revelation and higher divine knowledge.

Life in this physical plane is a mere preparation for the eternal life of everlasting sunshine and joy which is to come when one gets the knowledge of the Self through intense and constant meditation after purifying the mind. This immortal life of supreme joy is described in the *Bible* as the 'Kingdom of Heaven' which is within you, in your heart. Realise this immortal life by controlling the mind, and enjoy the supreme bliss of the Self.

Time — A Mode of the Mind

Time is but a mode of mind. It is also illusory like the objects. When your mind is deeply concentrated, a period of two hours appears like five minutes. If the mind is distracted and wandering, half an hour appears as two hours. This is everybody's experience. In dream also the experiences of some years take place within ten minutes. Through the play of the mind a kalpa is considered as a moment, and vice-versa.

If all the modifications of the mind stop through restraint (nirodhah), time will vanish. Time is a mental creation. Mind is a product or modification of the indescribable power of the Lord. The one power (shakti), which is known by various names, assumes various forms for keeping up the divine play of the Lord. Wonderful is the illusive power of the Lord! Still more wonderful is the Lord and His divine play (lila). He who obtains the grace of the Lord through total unreserved self-surrender and unswerving devotion understands His divine play, rejoices in Him, goes beyond time and mind and attains immortality.

Atman is One

Bulbs are of different colours but the light is the same in all bulbs. Even so, the bodies and mental attitudes (bhavanas) are different but Atman (the Self) is one in all beings. A white bulb represents sattvic mind or sattvic bhavana; a red bulb rajasic mind or rajasic bhavana; a black bulb tamasic mind or tamasic bhavana.

Bodies are different, mental attitudes are different, gunas (qualities born of nature) are different and actions are different, but the Self is the same in all beings.

Noses are different. Some noses are aquiline, some are broad, but the power (shakti) that grasps the smell is one in all noses. Flowers are different, colours of flowers are also different, but the organ that sees is one. Even so, bodies are different and minds are different, but the Intelligence (Self, Atman or consciousness) is one.

All colours are centred in the eye, all tastes are centred in the tongue, all touches are centred in the skin, all sounds are centred in the ear, all scents are centred in the nose, all senses are centred in the mind, all minds are centred in OM or Atman or the Supreme Self, the support of everything.

This universe is also an aspect of the Lord, because its creation, preservation and dissolution proceeds from Him. Golden ear-rings, armlets, etc., are nothing but gold; so also this world of names and forms is nothing but the Lord. All the forms are divine manifestations of the Lord. If you remember this constantly you will have a new angle of vision. You will be freed from attachment and hatred. You will attain Self-realisation through the worship of the Lord in His form as the manifested universe.

Metaphysics of the Inner Man

The physical body, the astral body, life-force (prana), intellect (buddhi), the instinctive mind, the spiritual mind and the spirit are the seven principles of man. Buddhi is pure reason. The seat of buddhi is just below the crown of the head in the pineal gland in the brain. Buddhi is manifested only in those persons who have developed right intuitive discrimination (viveka). The ordinary reason of worldly people is termed practical reason, which is dense and has limitations.

Prana is the vital-force or life-energy. It is the eternal symbol of God or Brahman. It is the link between the astral and physical body.

Prana is divided into physical prana and psychic prana. Breathing is an external manifestation of physical prana. All thoughts are due to the vibration of psychic prana in the subconscious. Prana is the horse and the body is the chariot. It vibrates and mind is set in motion. Mind thinks when prana moves. If it departs from the body all functions of the body will stop. The physical body will remain like a log of wood. Separation of prana from the physical body is called 'death' in common parlance. Control of prana leads to control of mind and vice-versa.

Just as an arrow is propelled by a bowman, so this body is propelled by prana. It is prana which manipulates this physical body and which fills and permeates it.

By the command of Brahman the ocean does not exceed its limits. By His command the sun shines and rises at the appointed time in the east. By His command the fire burns. By His command the mind, prana and the senses function.

Matter, prana and mind are the three relative manifestations of the Absolute. Prana is really a modification or manifestation of mind. Prana is the faculty of action. Matter emanates from prana. Prana proceeds from mind. Matter is below prana. Prana is above matter but below mind. Prana is positive to matter but negative to mind. Mind is positive to both prana and matter, but negative to will. Will is the centre of ego. Will is the general-in-chief which directs the mind and prana to all parts and in all directions. Intuition is above reason and is the channel of communication between man and spirit. Development of the will-power by auto-suggestion is the basic principle of raja yoga or vedanta.

The Power Within

If you separate yourself from negative feelings and identify yourself with the Supreme Being no external influence can affect you. You will be invulnerable. Sometimes depression manifests on account of some disappointment or failure, severe dyspepsia or heated debates, wrong thinking or wrong feeling. Drive out the feeling of depression and gloom at once by enquiry, singing divine songs, prayers, chanting of OM, pranayama, a brisk walk in the open air or thinking of the opposite quality, the feeling of joy. Try to be happy in all states and radiate only joy towards all around you.

Why do you weep, my child? You are more emotional than rational. Control the emotions and become calm. Remove the bandage from your eyes and see now. You are surrounded by truth and truth alone. All is light and bliss only. The cataract of ignorance has blurred your vision. Extract the cataract immediately. Put on a new pair of glasses by developing the inner eye of wisdom through regular practice of concentration.

It is not thought alone that determines action. There are some intelligent people who think reasonably on the pros and cons of a thing, but when the time comes they are led astray by temptations. They do wrong actions and repent later on. It is the feeling that really goads man to action. Some psychologists lay special stress on imagination and say that it is imagination that really determines action. They bring the following illustrations in support of their view. Suppose a long plank one foot broad is placed between two turrets, each twenty feet high. When you begin to walk on this plank you imagine that you will fall down, and so you actually fall down, whereas you are able to walk on the same plank when placed on the ground. Suppose you go on a bicycle along a narrow lane. You see a big stone on the way. You imagine that you will hit the cycle against the stone, and so you actually run the cycle against the stone. Some other psychologists say that it is the will that determines an action. Will can do everything. Vedantins are of this latter opinion.

Will is the basic power in man. It is the soul-force. If the desires are destroyed, will-power develops. Control of the sense organs also augments the will-power. Determination, patience, interest, attention, perseverance, tenacity, application, fixity of purpose, persistency, practice of celibacy and meditation on the Self develop the will-power. A man of strong will has perfect self-confidence. He achieves sanguine success in all his attempts. Failure is unknown to him. Do not mistake obstinacy or stubbornness for strong will. Stubbornness is born of tamas or inertia. It is a form of stupidity.

Within you is a vast magazine of power, within you is the ocean of knowledge, within you is the fountain of bliss. All faculties are latent in you. The inner man is the immortal Soul. You are identical with the supreme Self. Realise this and be free. Unfold your latent faculties through meditation. Tap the source, dive deep within and bring up the pearl of the Atman. Be bold, be cheerful. May you become a superman!

You are the architect of your own fate and fortune. You are the master of your own destiny. You can do and undo things. You can attain Brahmanhood by right thinking, right feeling and right acting. You can break old morbid habits by the power of your will.

You can destroy wrong tendencies, unholy desires and incorrect imaginations. You can cultivate new habits, you can change your nature, you can build up a beautiful character. You can move the whole world by your spiritual force, you can elevate others also to the status of divinity. You can control the forces of nature and command the elements.

The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated. The rays of the mind are drawn towards various objects. You will have to gather them patiently through dispassion (vairagya) and practice (abhyasa), renunciation and austerity, and then march boldly on with indefatigable energy towards God or Brahman. When the mental rays are concentrated, illumination begins.

The intelligent, skilful and ever vigilant yogi is ever ready with his arrows to kill this wandering mischievous, turbulent mind. He attains ethical perfection, discipline of the senses and the mind, steadies the body, regulates the breath, adjusts the diet, controls the semen and finally hits at the mind straightaway. Then he enters into deep samprajnata-samadhi. You will find in the *Mandukya Upanishad*: "*Pranava or OM is the bow, the mind or the lower self the arrow, and Brahman the mark or the target. If one carefully shoots at the mark, he becomes one with it.*"

The Subconscious Mind

It is an admitted psychological fact that the mental processes by which you obtain knowledge are not merely confined to the field of consciousness, but also cover the field of subconsciousness. If you know the technique of speaking to your subconscious mind and the art or science of extracting work from it just as you would speak to your servant or a dear old friend, then all knowledge will be yours. Yes, it is a question of practice, and practice will make you perfect.

All that you have inherited, all that you have brought with you through innumerable births in the past, all that you have seen, heard, enjoyed, tasted, read or known either in this life or in past lives, are hidden in your subconscious mind.

When you are unable to solve some puzzle in metaphysics, science or philosophy, ask your subconscious mind to do the work for you with the full trust and confidence that you are bound to get the right solution from it. Master the technique of concentration and way of commanding your subconscious mind and make full and free use of all that knowledge. Command your subconscious mind in the following manner: "Look here, you subconscious mind! I want the solution to this puzzle or problem very urgently tomorrow morning. Kindly do it quickly." Let your command be given in very clear terms, and let there be no ambiguity about it. You will positively get the answer from your subconscious mind the next morning. But sometimes the subconscious mind may be busy otherwise, and in such cases you will have to wait for some days. You will have to repeat the same command regularly every day at a fixed time.

If an idea is planted in the mind it grows at night through the operation of the subconscious mind. The subconscious mind never takes any rest. From the authentic writings and the experiences of a hypnotised person we can clearly infer the existence of the subconscious mind which operates throughout the twenty-four hours.

Practice of telepathy, thought-reading, hypnotism, mesmerism, distant healing, psychic healing, etc., clearly prove that mind exists and that a higher developed mind can influence and subjugate the lower mind.

The occult phenomena that take place in the mental world are all based on scientific laws. Occultists and raja yogins should have a comprehensive, intelligent understanding of these laws. Then only will they be able to easily control the psychic forces.

Mind is Like a Chameleon

Mind is not only daily made, but hourly made. Every minute it changes its colour and shape like a chameleon. It is very wavering and unsteady.

Neem leaves are bitter when you are in normal health, but if you taste them when you are bitten by a cobra, they are sweet. Bitterness and sweetness do not lie in the leaves, but they are in the subject. They are created by the mind. It is the mind that gives the qualities of shape, colour, taste, etc., to the object.

Just as the water that flows from a tank to the fields through channels assumes the forms of the respective fields, so also the mind goes out through the channel of the eyes, pervades the objects and assumes the forms of the respective objects. As soon as one field is filled with water, the water is diverted and sent to the next field. Water thus flows from one field to another field. Even so, the mind assumes the form of one object, and then it jumps to another object, then to a third object and so on.

Sometimes one says: "I was absent in mind, I did not hear. I was absent in mind, I did not see." In this manner it is evident that a person sees with the mind and hears with the mind. Desire, determination, uncertainty, belief, unbelief, steadiness, unsteadiness, intellect and fear are mind alone.

When one is under chloroform anaesthesia, the activity of the cells of the brain is inhibited by the effect of chloroform. The mind, which has its seat in the brain during waking consciousness, now rests in a place midway between the throat and the heart and so one has no feeling of pain even when his leg is amputated. Man feels pain only when the mind is connected with the body. When one is under chloroform the mind is disconnected from the physical body.

When the mind is fully occupied in the affairs of warfare the soldier does not feel any serious injury when he gets a gunshot wound in the leg. He is filled with enthusiasm. He is not conscious of his body for the time being. When the excitement is over, when he sees some blood spots on his clothing or when one of his comrades points out to him the wound on the leg, he comes to consciousness. Then he is alarmed a bit. The power of imagination havocs now. He gets a collapse. The power of imagination always exaggerates.

Conscience is the result of the action of environment on the mind. It is one's own convictions. It is ever-changing. The conscience of one man differs from that of another. If you acquire some more experience you will have a different conscience.

Though the mind is the same, the mode of thinking is different in different persons. The mentality, temperament and latent tendencies are different in different persons. A Persian poet, a Delhi grocer and an Ayodhya priest were travelling together on the road to Badrinarayan. Near Deva Prayag, where the Ganges and the Alakananda meet together, a nightingale was singing in a very melodious tune. The Persian poet said: "This bird is singing subhan teri kudaret — How magnanimous is Thy nature's glory." The grocer said: "The bird is singing hing haldi adharak — Asafoetida, turmeric, ginger." The Ayodhya priest said: "The bird is singing Rama-Sita-Dasarath (names of God)".

A philosopher will make out some kind of philosophy even from abusive words and unpleasant expressions.

The mind born of meditation is free from desires and impressions. There cannot be any abode for desires or attraction and repulsion or virtue and sin in the mind that is born of meditation.

Marvels of the Mind

Look at the marvels of the mind! One is struck with awe and wonder when he witnesses a hypnotised person in trance and hears his narratives. The hypnotised person narrates very lucidly the life history and incidents of a person whom he has not seen in his life.

A maid servant who was attending on a Hebrew priest used to hear the Hebrew verses during her service. She suddenly developed a double-personality when she was sick in the hospital, and repeated Hebrew verses. She did not know the Hebrew language. All the impressions (of hearing from the priest) were in the subconscious mind, and she repeated the verses. No impressions are lost. They are indelibly recorded in the gramophone machine of the mind stuff (chitta).

A priest used to forget his old personality and assume a new personality, a new name and a new vocation for six months. When he developed a double-personality he would leave his old house and entirely forget all about his old life, and then return after six months and entirely forget all about the second personality he assumed for six months.

Power of Thought

Man is thought-formed. "*As a man thinks, such indeed he is and as he thinks in this world he becomes on departing hence.*" *Chhandogya Upanishad* (III-41-1)

If all thoughts are eliminated there remains nothing which can be called 'mind'. So 'thoughts' are the mind. Again, there is no such thing as the world independent of and apart from thoughts.

Your thoughts mould your character and shape your destiny. Thought has tremendous power. It is more powerful than electricity. Thoughts control your life. Conquer your thoughts.

Thoughts gain strength by repetition. If you entertain an evil thought or good thought once, this evil thought or good thought has a tendency to recur again. Thoughts crowd together just as birds of the same feather flock together, so if you entertain one evil thought all sorts of evil thoughts join together and pull you down. If you entertain any good thought, all good thoughts join together and raise you up.

Kill ruthlessly the fear-thoughts, selfish-thoughts, hate-thoughts, lustful-thoughts and other morbid negative thoughts. These evil thoughts induce weakness, disease, disharmony, depression and despair.

At first an evil thought enters the mind. Then you entertain a strong imagination. You take delight in dwelling on that evil thought. You give it consent to stay in the mind. Gradually the evil thought, when it is not resisted, takes a strong hold in your mind. Then it becomes very difficult to drive it off. The proverb goes: "Give a rogue an inch and he will take a mile." This is true of thoughts also.

Like attracts like. If you entertain an evil thought this thought attracts all sorts of evil thoughts from others. You pass on that thought to others also. Thought moves; it is a living force. Thought is a thing. If you allow your mind to dwell on a sublime thought this thought will attract good thoughts from others. You pass on that good thought to others. You pollute the world with your bad thoughts. You improve the world with your good thoughts.

Cultivate positive thoughts such as mercy, courage, love and purity. The negative thoughts will die by themselves. Try this and feel your strength. Pure thoughts will infuse in you a new exalted life.

The thoughts you create in your mind and the images you form in your daily life will help in making you what you are or what you want to become. If you constantly think of the pure, immortal Atman and meditate on the formula 'I am Brahman', you will become identical with Atman. If you constantly think of Lord Krishna you will become identical with the Lord. You will abide in Him for ever.

Sublime divine thoughts produce tremendous influence in the mind and drive away evil thoughts and change the mental substance. Mind is wholly changed into light by entertaining divine thoughts.

Thoughts are solid things, more solid than a lump of stone. They have tremendous force or power. Utilise this thought-power carefully. It can serve you nicely in a variety of ways. But do not misuse this power at random. If you do misuse it you will have quick downfall or a terrible reaction. Utilise it to help others.

From thinking comes attachment; from attachment desire is born; from desire proceeds anger — anger arises when desire is frustrated by some cause or the other; from anger arises delusion; from delusion, failure of memory, from failure of memory, loss of intellect; from loss of intellect man is totally ruined. If you want to attain everlasting peace do not think of objects but think always of the immortal, blissful Atman alone.

Desires by themselves are harmless. They are galvanised by the power of imagination or thought. Then only they do much havoc. Man muses or thinks on the objects of the senses. He imagines that he will get a great deal of pleasure from them. This imagination co-operates with the desires. Then the desires are invigorated or vitalised. They attack the deluded jiva vehemently.

The external objects are continuously acting upon the brain. The sense-impressions reach the brain through sense-avenues and produce mental stimuli. Now you are conscious of the external objects. Consciousness may be caused by an awakening, either by an external stimulus, i.e., a stimulus from a sense-impression or an internal stimulus through memory. Each simple sense-impression is a highly complex bundle of afferent-stimuli (stimuli that are carried from outside towards the brain). A stimulus is an awakening in the substratum of the mind. The associations of awakenings which arise from a single sense-impression are very complex.

When the mind thinks of worldly objects there is order. The mind may think of a rose and then it may think of a bungalow, money, sea-voyage, aeroplane, motor car, restaurants and pictures. You may think that the mind is aimlessly wandering, but there is order in its movement. The idea of a bungalow comes when it thinks of a rose because the rose is grown in the compound of a bungalow. As soon as it thinks of a bungalow the idea of money creeps in, because a wealthy man who possesses money lives in a bungalow. Then the mind wants to enjoy pleasant objects with the help of money. It wants to take a pleasure-trip to Europe and move about there in an aeroplane and automobile, to eat dainties in hotels and to see pictures in cinemas.

Molten gold which is poured into a crucible assumes the shape of the crucible. Even so, the mind assumes the form of the object which it intensely dwells upon. If it thinks of an orange it assumes the shape of an orange. If it thinks of Lord Krishna it assumes the form of Lord Krishna. You must train the mind properly and give it proper pure sattvic food for assimilation. Have a pure background of thought or mental image.

It is the mental attitude that determines the nature of an action and brings its fruits. You may embrace your mother or sister or your wife. The action is the same but the mental feeling (bhava) is different.

Watch your ideas and feelings always. Your attitude should always be pure. You should always entertain thoughts of God. Watch the feeling during meditation.

If you have purity and concentration you can make the mind assume any feeling you like. If you think of mercy your whole being will be saturated with mercy. If you think of peace your whole being will be pervaded with peace.

Chitta

The subconscious mind is termed chitta. Much of your subconscious consists of submerged experiences, memories thrown into the background, but recoverable.

When you show symptoms of losing your memory as you grow old, the first symptom is that you find it difficult to remember the names of persons. The reason is not far to seek. All the names are arbitrary. They are like labels. There are no associations along with the names. The mind generally remembers through associations, as the impressions become deep thereby. You can remember in old age some passages you have read in school and college, but you find it difficult to remember in the evening a passage you have read in the morning. The reason is that the mind has lost its power of grasping ideas. The cells have degenerated. Those who overwork mentally, who do not observe the rules of celibacy and who are afflicted with many cares, worries and anxieties, lose their power of memory soon. Even in old age you can remember old events as there are associations with these events.

The mental processes are limited to the field of consciousness alone. The field of subconscious mentation is of a much greater extent than that of conscious mentation. Only ten percent of mental activities come into the field of consciousness. At least ninety percent of our mental life is subconscious. We sit and try to solve a problem and fail. We look around, try again and again, but fail. Suddenly, an idea dawns and leads to the solution of the problem. The subconscious process was at work. Messages when ready come out like a flash from the subconscious mind or chitta.

Sometimes you go to sleep at night with the thought: "I must get up very early in the morning to catch a train." This message is taken up by the subconscious mind and it is this subconscious mind that wakes you up unfailingly at the exact hour. Subconscious mind is your constant companion and sincere friend. You repeatedly fail at night to get a solution for a problem in arithmetic or geometry. In the morning when you wake up you get a clear answer. Even in sleep it works incessantly without any rest. It arranges, classifies, compares, sorts all facts and works out a proper satisfactory solution. This is all due to the subconscious mind.

When you desire to remember a thing you will have to make a psychic exertion. You will have to go up and down the depths of the different levels of the subconscious mind and then pick up the right thing from a curious mixture of multifarious irrelevant matter. Just as the mail sorter in the Railway Mail Service takes up the right letter by moving the hand up and down along the different pigeon-holes, so also the sorter in the subconscious mind goes up and down along the pigeon-holes in the subconscious mind and brings the right thing to the level of normal consciousness.

The other functions of chitta are remembrance, attention and investigation. When you repeat a mantra it is the chitta that does the remembering. It does a lot of work. It turns out better work than the mind or intellect.

With the help of the subconscious mind you can change your vicious nature by cultivating healthy, virtuous qualities that are opposed to the undesirable ones. If you want to overcome fear, mentally deny that you have fear and concentrate your attention upon the opposite quality, the ideal of courage. When this is developed, fear vanishes by itself. The positive always overpowers the negative. This is an infallible law of nature. You can acquire a liking for distasteful tasks and duties by cultivating a desire and taste for them. You can establish new habits, new ideals, new ideas and tastes and a new character in the subconscious mind by changing the old ones.

Vrittis — Modifications of the Mind

The *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* commence:

> *Now, then, an enquiry into Yoga.* (I-1)
> *Yoga is the restraint of the modifications of the mind.* (I-2)
> *The mental modifications are five kinds, some painful and others not painful.* (I-5)

If you want to restrain the modifications it is necessary for you to have a comprehensive understanding of them. The painful vrittis have to be controlled by the non-painful vrittis and these in turn have to be mastered by absolute non-attachment or dispassion or indifference to sensual enjoyments. The painful modifications are those which bring afflictions and which become the field for the growth of the vehicle of actions.

> *Right knowledge, wrong knowledge, imagination, memory and sleep are the five modifications.* (I-6)
> *Right knowledge is direct perception or inference or testimony.* (I-7)

Right knowledge is that which is unquestionable, reliable and true. Right knowledge is right cognition. Wrong knowledge is misconception.

Right knowledge is a help or step to attain knowledge of the Self. It is of no use for one who is resting in his own native divine glory. A full-blown yogi depends on his own realisation for his knowledge. He is not in need of these proofs. An ordinary man depends on direct perception only for his knowledge. A man who has advanced a little depends on direct perception and inference. One who is a little more advanced depends on these two proofs, plus testimony.

Direct perception is that knowledge which is caused by direct contact of any of the five senses of knowledge — ear, eye, tongue, skin and nose — with the objects of knowledge. If there is no contradiction in your two perceptions, you can call it a proof or right cognition. If there is contradiction you begin to doubt at once. You see a river or mountain. You feel heat and cold. You taste an orange or mango. These are all direct cognitions. There cannot be any contradictions in these experiences.

If there is a flood in a river you infer that there must have been heavy rain on the previous day. If you see smoke, you infer that there must be fire. These are all inferences. Inference is knowledge produced by a previous knowledge of the relation between a characteristic mark and the possessor of the mark. You see a clear sign and from that you come to the thing signified. You see a table and infer that the table must have been made by a carpenter. You see the external universe and thereby infer that there must be a Creator. This is inference.

Testimony and apta vakyam are synonymous terms. A competent person is an apta. He is omniscient. He is a seer or sage who has direct knowledge. The whole book of inner knowledge or knowledge of the Self is revealed to him like a fruit in the hand. His words serve as direct authority. There can never be any mistake in his statements. His words are infallible. All his words are gospel-truths. He has derived super-intuitional knowledge beyond the senses through asamprajnata samadhi. His words will not contradict reasoning and past human experiences.

> *Wrong knowledge is false perception whose real form is not of its own.* (I-8)

Wrong knowledge is when the essential nature of a thing does not appear, and a false form appears in its stead. I will give you clear illustrations: Mother-of-pearl is mistaken for silver, a post is mistaken for a man, a rope is mistaken for a snake. Wrong knowledge is wrong cognition brought about by some defect either in the object itself or in the means leading to it. Doubt is also included in this.

> *Imagination follows from mere words which are nothing in reality.* (I-9)

As instances of imagination we have: 'horns of a hare', 'son of a barren woman', 'lotus in the sky', etc. The difference between imagination and wrong knowledge lies in the fact that imagination can hardly be removed by a careful observation of the object, as wrong knowledge is. As soon as you closely observe the notion of silver in the mother-of-pearl, or snake in the rope, it disappears.

Imaginary fears of various sorts, exaggeration, concoction, mental dramatization and building castles in the air are all due to the power of imagination. Even a perfect man full of health has some imaginary disease or other due to the power of imagination of the mind. Much energy is wasted on account of imaginary fears. A man may have a little weakness or fault. When he becomes your enemy you at once exaggerate and magnify his weakness and faults. This is due to the power of imagination.

Whenever the minds of two friends are strained by ill-feelings, these minds begin to exaggerate and concoct things. Fault-finding nature increases. It is very difficult to get at the truth of the statements of these friends with a broken friendship. Their utterances are always coloured by their inner feelings. The power of imagination plays havoc now.

I shall explain to you the nature of 'mental dramatisation'. Mark the ways of the mind. During conversation with your friends the mind sometimes imagines in vain that it has hurt the feelings of your friend. It spends much of its energy in unnecessary feelings. You think: "How can I see him tomorrow morning? He may be displeased with me." Next morning when you meet him nothing happens. Your friend starts a pleasing conversation and smiles. You are surprised. To your great astonishment, the subject of talk takes quite a different turn altogether. A family man imagines when a severe epidemic of plague ravages: "What shall I do if my wife develops plague and dies now? I have got six children." This is his vain imagination. Nothing happens. Sometimes when the train moves slowly on the Pamban Bridge over the sea near Rameshwar, the mind imagines: "If the bridge gives way now, what will become of me? I will be smashed to pieces." A touch of fear creeps in. There are a thousand and one ways of mental dramatisation like these. The power of imagination plays a vital part in mental dramatisation.

Here are other examples. There is a rumour that there is cholera in George Town, Madras; the man in Park Town falsely imagines that he will get cholera. He worries and actually gets cholera out of fear. Your friend did not talk to you as he was running in haste to catch the train; you imagine that he was offended. There was a rumour that a riot broke out in London; you falsely imagine that your son who was studying in London might have died. Eradicate these modifications through enquiry. Do not identify yourself with any modification. Identify yourself with Brahman and rest peacefully forever.

Right knowledge, wrong knowledge and imagination are enjoyed in the waking state, and the subtle desires of these are enjoyed in dream.

> *Sleep is a modification of mind which has the cause of nothingness as its support.* (I-10)

Sleep manifests when there is preponderance of inertia (tamas), when purity (sattva) and activity (rajas) subside and when there is no knowledge of the external world. Ordinary people think that there is complete absence of vrittis in sleep. It is not so. As there is memory in you when you wake up, and as you say when you wake up: "I slept soundly; I knew nothing," there ought to have been a particular kind of subtle wave in the mind during sleep. It should not be understood that sleep is not a transformation or vritti of the mind. If it were so, the remembrance, "I slept soundly," would not follow on waking, for you never remember what you have not experienced.

Sleep is not merely a state of inactivity or passive repose. In this state the causal body functions vigorously. The associated consciousness is also present. It has deep philosophical significance. The individual soul is almost in close contact with the Absolute. Just as a thin layer of muslin veils the face of a lady and renders it invisible to the eyes of her husband, so also a thin layer of ignorance separates the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. Vedantins study this state very deeply and carefully. It gives the clue for non-dual philosophers to trace, search and find out the hidden silent witness.

The Mother of this world takes the individual souls back to Her and Her Lord during deep sleep, hugs them to Her bosom, bestows on them refreshing peace, new vigour, vitality and strength, and makes them quite fit for the ensuing battle of life on the following day. But for this sleep, life would be absolutely impossible in this physical plane where misery, diseases, cares, worries, fears and anxieties of various kinds trouble man every second. If a man does not get sound sleep even for one night, if he loses his sleep one night for three hours by keeping watch over a sick patient or attending the cinema, how miserable, gloomy and depressed he feels the next day!

Sleep is a particular kind of vritti. This must be controlled like other vrittis if you want to enter into samadhi.

> *Memory is the 'not slipping away' of the objects perceived.* (I-11)

Remembrance is a function brought into being entirely by the impression left by former experience. Knowledge produced by recollecting impressions of past experiences is memory. The objects cognised do not slip away from the mind. They come back to the surface of the conscious mind through the influence of latent tendencies that are imbedded in the subconscious mind.

The above five kinds of vrittis come under the three categories of pleasure, pain and delusion.

Samskaras

> *To the man of discrimination all is painful indeed, due to the consequences, anxiety and samskaras (impressions) and also to the contradictions of the functioning of the gunas (qualities of nature).* (II-15)

Every action, every desire, every enjoyment or suffering and in fact all experiences leave in the camera-plate of the subconscious mind subtle impressions or residual potencies (samskaras), which are the root cause for future births, life and the experiences of pleasure and pain.

A samskara or an experience is formed or developed in the subconscious mind the very moment when the mind is experiencing something. There is no gap between the present experience and the formation of an impression in the subconscious mind. Revival of these impressions induces memory. The sum total of these samskaras that are lodged in the subconscious mind constitutes what is called prarabdha — the portion of karma that determines one's present life.

Just as matter and energy are indestructible, so also samskaras are indestructible, but they are destroyed by the fire of wisdom and the highest state of samadhi.

The yogi dives deep inside and comes in direct contact with these samskaras. He directly perceives them through his yoga vision. By samyama (concentration, meditation and samadhi) on these samskaras he acquires knowledge of previous lives. By samyama on the samskaras of others he gets knowledge of their past lives also.

All neophytes in the spiritual path experience a sort of tug-of-war between the old sensual samskaras and the newly generated spiritual samskaras 'rising up' and then 'falling down'. When they grow purer and purer they will not be dragged down by the worldly samskaras.

A drawing notebook is nothing but paper with some pictures. When the pictures are erased by a rubber the notebook contains blank sheets of paper only. Even so, when the samskaras in the mind are erased by meditation and samadhi, mind is nothing but Brahman only. The mind of a worldly man is a bundle of samskaras; the mind of a sage is Brahman only.

The ignorant man is an instrument in the hands of his samskaras and karma. He slowly gains strength by understanding his real and essential nature, by doing spiritual practices and by renouncing desires and egoism.

Gunas

Sattva, rajas and tamas are the three gunas or qualities of the chitta (subconscious mind). Sattva is purity, light or knowledge. Rajas is passion or activity. Tamas is inertia or darkness. Sattva is the inherent quality of the chitta. Chitta is born of sattva guna, but when it mixes with rajas and tamas all the worldly taints manifest.

No guna can exist by itself. The three gunas exist in a state of combination and cannot be separated like so many particles, distinct from one another. By checking rajas and tamas you can increase sattva; and when there is a preponderance of sattva, rajas and tamas are controlled; but they lurk in the mind for the time being. When sattva increases the mind becomes steady like the flame of a lamp in a windless place. He who is sattvic can do real concentration and meditation and can enter into samadhi easily. Your important duty is to increase sattva and to control the senses and the mind. Other duties are secondary. A sensible man only can understand this point. When there is increase of sattva there is brightness and brilliance in the face, lightness in the body, joy, purity, strength, peace and illumination. When there is a preponderance of rajas, sattva and tamas are controlled. When there is a preponderance of tamas, sattva and rajas are controlled. A rajasic man loves power and objects of senses. A tamasic man does vicious actions on account of ignorance.

From your look and behaviour one can find out what sort of guna is prevailing in you. There is always a mixture; but the preponderant element can be found. You can find out the rajasic temperament in a man; he has the rajasic look, he likes gaudy rajasic dress and rajasic food, he will be ever engaged in worldly activities. He wants to lord over people. He has a domineering attitude. He wants power, prestige and position. He is much attached to wife, children and property.

You can at once spot the sattvic man who wears a japa mala around his neck, who is humble and simple in demeanour, wears simple dress and eats simple sattvic food. He will be ever God-loving, dispassionate and powerful. He has a calm, serene mind, always enquiring into the nature of the world and the nature of the Self; always immersed in a meditative mood, with a natural inclination to study books of spiritual nature and to live in solitude.

If you have a desire for onion and garlic, for meat and mutton, it shows you have a rajasic nature. It will disturb the peace of your mind and excite the lower passions. Food plays a prominent part in shaping your nature. Look at an elephant; it eats only leaves and vegetables. How calm it is, in spite of its enormous size and strength! Look at the tiger, on the other hand. In spite of its smallness, how cruel and dangerous it is! The nature is in conformity with the food.

The whole manifested universe is made up of the three gunas. Modification of these gunas constitutes all sorts of immovable and moving things. The gunas change every minute and produce the various phenomena of nature.

> *The past and the future exist in their real nature due to the difference in the condition of the gunas.* (IV-12)

As the effect is contained in a subtle state in the cause itself, that which is in a state of contraction attains the state of expansion, just like the tree from the seed. The substance exists always. The outer coverings change according to the changes of coverings of the gunas or qualities. As gunas change, difference in feeling also occurs. Changes take place like a continuous current. The future is a manifestation which is to be; the past is the experience which has been experienced; the present is that which is in active operation. We have these three periods of time with reference to a marked indicative point. The seeds of everything exist in a subtle state. That is the reason why samyama (concentration, meditation and samadhi) on the three transformations or changes produces knowledge of the past, present and future.

> *They (the characteristics), whether manifest or subtle, are of the nature of gunas or qualities.* (IV-13)

These characteristics are of the nature of the manifested when they exist in the present and are of the nature of the subtle when they are passed into the past, or are as yet unmanifested. They are all of the nature of gunas. In truth, the world is only gunas.

> *The reality of things is the result of the unity of modifications.* (IV-14)

As one guna is prominent and the other two are subordinate there is only one effect. When the sattva guna is predominating and rajas and tamas are under subordination, the organs of knowledge are formed. When rajas is preponderating and the sattva and tamas are under subordination, the organs of action are formed. Each of these modifications is always known as one.

The strong current of modifications of the mind will be directed along the virtuous path if sattva is predominating in the mind. The man will do virtuous actions and thoughts of God will manifest. His mind will be one-pointed and the meditative mood will come by itself without exertion. If rajas and tamas predominate, the mental current and mental energy flow along a vicious path and the man will do vicious actions. The sattvic mental current will make you turn inward and take you to kaivalya or moksha, while rajasic and tamasic currents will throw you down in samsara.

In spiritual neophytes the sattvic state of mind will not last for a long time. Rajas and tamas will try to rush in. You will have to be very vigilant and watch the mind through thoughtful introspection.

Just as you squeeze out the toothpaste from the collapsible tube, you will have to squeeze out all rajas from this bodily tube and fill it with sattva. Then you will become a dhyana yogi.

The gross impurities of the mind — rajas and tamas — should be removed by heating the mind with the fire of dispassion (vairagya) and practice (abhyasa).

By increasing the sattvic modifications of the mind such as forgiveness, love, mercy, magnanimity, generosity, truthfulness and celibacy, you can destroy the rajasic and tamasic modifications.

Vrittis that emanate from rajas and tamas are all painful ones. All vrittis that proceed from sattva are not painful. Sattvic vritti or emotion is quiet. Rajasic vritti or emotion is terrible and tamasic vritti is confused. Mercy, forbearance, generosity and courage are sattvic emotions. Desire, affection, attachment and avarice are rajasic emotions. Infatuation, fear, sloth and carelessness are tamasic emotions. Rajasic and tamasic emotions are of a turbid nature. Hence, they are not capable of receiving a reflection of the blissful nature of Atman but they can receive reflection of intelligence. Fire has heat and light. Boiled water takes the heat of fire but does not take the power of giving light. Even so, rajasic and tamasic emotions present a reflection of intelligence but not of bliss. Burning wood partakes of both heat and light. Even so, sattvic emotions present a reflection of both blissfulness and intelligence.

Sattva is jnana shakti (the power of knowing), rajas is kriya shakti (the power of acting) and tamas is dravya shakti (the power of substantiality). Manas or mind and the five organs of sensation are born of sattva. Prana and the five organs of action are born of rajas. The five elements — ether, air, fire, water and earth — are born of tamas. Air is a modification of ether; fire is a modification of air; water is a modification of fire; earth is a modification of water.

Action that proceeds from the basis of sattva cannot bind a man, but the action that springs from the basis of tamas will lead to bondage. The former is no karma at all. It is burnt in the fire of wisdom. The latter is an offspring of selfishness. For instance, in the *Ramayana* Sri Rama fought with Ravana, but the basis was sattva. In the case of Ravana the basis was tamas, though in both the action of 'fighting' was the same.

Rajas creates oscillation of the mind. Activity proceeds when rajas is mixed either with sattva or tamas. You do noble actions and exhibit noble virtues when the basis for action is sattva. Craftiness, meanness, hypocrisy and deceit emanate when the basis for action is tamas.

In the beginning, when you are passionate, you show bitterest feelings of spite and revenge towards your enemies. As you advance in spirituality by selfless service and meditation these feelings of hatred soften down gradually to simple indifference only. Later on when you advance a step further, when your mind is filled with more sattva (purity), even this indifference vanishes. You will develop intense love for them. You will develop pure equal vision.

If anyone talks much, eats much or moves much he cannot have an inner life in Atman. He has a mind with out-going tendencies and out-going energies. His mind is filled with the quality of rajas.

Do not mistake the promptings of the lower mind for the voice of the soul. The higher mind, which tends towards virtue, is sattvic mind. This higher mind elevates man. It guides him. It acts as a true preceptor. You should try to hear the voice of the sattvic mind. If a wrong action is done the sattvic mind will prick you. This is the sign to know that the action is bad. If there is joy and elevation of the mind, the act is a righteous one. The mind which tends towards luxury and evil is the lower (rajasa-tamasic) mind. This mind is the cause for one's downfall. Annihilate rajas and tamas by increasing sattva. You will be quite safe.

Meditation is done with the help of the mind. Mind is an effect of ignorance. Through the effect the cause (Brahman) is to be known. Mind that is filled with rajas and tamas is insentient. A sattvic mind that is equipped with the four means is Brahman itself. It is a mass of effulgence. The scriptures emphatically declare: "Through the (pure) mind only, is Brahman to be seen or realised." In meditation or yoga there is an indescribable power which takes the individual soul to the Supreme Soul.

Tread the path of Truth or the path of Self-realisation, even though with faltering steps. You must have the highest ideal before you, then you are bound to succeed. All obstacles will vanish like mist before the sun. Be not troubled, be not anxious if there is a little delay in the descent of the divine light. Do not grieve, do not despair. Be regular in your meditation. Never cease to strive. You will reach the goal soon. The way to freedom or moksha is thrown open to you now. March boldly on the spiritual path.

Within you is hidden God; within you is the immortal soul; within you is the inexhaustible spiritual treasure; within you is the fount of joy and happiness; within you is the ocean of bliss. Look within for this happiness which you have sought in vain in the perishable sensual objects. Rest peacefully in your own Atman and drink the nectar of immortality.

CONTROL OF MIND

Balance of Mind

Man's mind is only a fragment of the universal mind, or cosmic mind. Cosmic mind is the sum total of all individual minds. Learn to merge your little mind in the cosmic mind and get omniscience and experience cosmic consciousness.

Keep a balanced mind always. This is a very important thing. It is no doubt a difficult practice, but you will have to do it if you wish to succeed in concentration. Keeping the balance of mind in pleasure and pain, in heat and cold, in gain and loss, in success and failure, in praise and censure and in respect and disrespect is real wisdom. This is very trying indeed, but if you are able to do this you are a mighty potentate on earth. You are fit to be adored. You are the most wealthy man, though you are clad in loin-cloth, though you have nothing to eat. You are very strong, though you have a dilapidated physical frame.

Worldly people lose their balance even for trifling things. They get irritated and lose their temper quickly. Energy is wasted when one loses his temper. Those who want to develop balance of mind should develop discrimination and practise celibacy and concentration. Those who waste their semen get irritated very frequently. Control and concentration of the mind is very difficult of performance. Saint Thayumanavar in his inimitable poem *Tejomayanandam* has written a beautiful verse on the difficulty of controlling the mind. (Thayumanavar was a poet-saint who lived about 200 years ago in the district of Tanjore, South India. His songs on vedanta are soul-inspiring and elevating. All his songs are now available on gramophone records. They penetrate deep into the hearts of the hearers. They are very very popular in South India. They are pregnant with deep, subtle, philosophical thoughts.) Roughly and freely translated this means:

You can control a mad elephant;
You can shut the mouth of the bear and the tiger;
You can ride a lion;
You can play with the cobra;
By alchemy you can eke out your livelihood;
You can wander through the universe incognito;
You can make vassals of the gods;
You can ever be youthful;
You can walk on water;
You can live in fire;
You can achieve all siddhis, seated in your home.
But to be restful by control of the mind
Is rare and difficult.

The senses are your real foes. They draw you out and perturb your peace of mind. Do not keep company with them. Subdue them. Restrain them. Curb them just as you would curb your enemies on the battlefield. This is not a day's work. It demands patient and protracted practice for a very long time. Control of the senses is really control of the mind. All the senses must be controlled. Starve them to death and do not give them what they want, then they will obey your orders quite implicitly. All worldly-minded persons are slaves of their senses, though they are educated, though they possess immense wealth and though they hold judicial and executive powers. If you are a slave of meat-eating, for instance, you will begin to exercise control over your tongue the moment you give up the meat-eating habit entirely for six months. You will consciously feel that you have gained a little supremacy over this troublesome sense of taste which began to revolt against you some time ago.

Be cautious, vigilant and circumspect. Watch your mind and its modifications. Lord Jesus said: "Watch and pray." Watching the mind is introspection. One in a million does this beneficial and soul-elevating practice. People are immersed in worldliness. They madly run after money and women. They have no time to think of God and higher spiritual things. The sun dawns and the mind runs again in its usual old sensual grooves of eating, drinking, amusing and sleeping. The day has passed. In this way this whole life passes away. There is neither moral development nor spiritual progress.

He who does daily introspection, self-analysis and self-examination can find out his own defects and remove them by suitable methods, and can gradually have a perfect control over the mind. He will not allow the intruders — lust, anger, greed, delusion and pride — to enter the mental factory. He can practise concentration uninterruptedly. If one method fails you should take recourse to another. The practice demands patience, perseverance, leech-like tenacity, application, iron will, subtle intellect and courage. But the reward is invaluable. It is immortality, supreme peace and infinite bliss!

You should try to possess a serene mind. You should practise serenity every moment of your yoga career. If your mind is restless you cannot make an iota of progress in concentration. Therefore the first and foremost thing that you should possess by all means is serenity of mind. Silent meditation in the morning, renunciation of desires, suitable diet, discipline of the senses and observance of the vow of silence daily for about at least an hour will produce serenity. All vain habitual thoughts, wild fancies, wrong feelings, cares, worries, anxieties, confused ideas and all kinds of imaginary fears must be completely done away with. Then, and then only, can you hope to get a peaceful mind. The foundation in yoga can well and truly be laid only if the aspirant possesses serenity to maximum degree. Only a calm mind can grasp the truth, can see God or Atman and receive the Divine Light. The spiritual experiences will be permanent if you have a quiet mind, otherwise they will come and go.

As soon as you wake up in the morning, pray fervently to the Lord, sing His names and meditate upon Him with all your heart. Then make a firm determination: "I will observe celibacy today. I will speak the truth today. I will not hurt the feelings of others today. I will not lose my temper today." Watch your mind. Be resolute. You will surely succeed that day. Then continue the vow for the whole week. You will gain strength and your will-power will develop. Then continue the vow for the whole month. Even if you commit some mistakes in the beginning, you need not be unnecessarily alarmed. Mistakes are your best teachers. You will not commit the same mistakes again. If you are earnest and sincere the Lord will shower His grace upon you. The Lord will give you strength to face the difficulties and troubles in the daily battle of life.

He who has controlled his mind is really happy and free. Physical freedom is no freedom at all. If you are easily carried away by surging emotions and impulses, if you are under the grip of moods, cravings and passions, how can you be really happy, O sweet beloved child? You are like a rudderless boat. You are tossed about hither and thither like a piece of straw in the vast expanse of the ocean. You laugh for five minutes and weep for five hours. What can wife, son, friends, money, fame and power do for you when you are under the sway of the impulses of your mind? He is the true hero who has controlled his mind. There is an adage: "He who has controlled his mind has controlled the world." True victory is over the mind. That is real freedom.

Thorough, rigorous discipline and self-imposed restrictions will eventually eradicate all desires, thoughts, impulses, cravings and passions. Only then, and not until then, can you expect to be free from the thraldom of the mind. You should not give any leniency to the mind. The mind is a mischievous imp. Curb it by drastic measures. Become a perfect yogi. Money cannot give you freedom. Freedom is not a commodity that can be purchased in the market. It is a rare, hidden treasure guarded by a five-hooded serpent. Unless you kill or tame this serpent you cannot have access to that treasure. That treasure is spiritual wealth, freedom, bliss. The serpent is your mind. The five hoods are the five senses through which the mind-serpent hisses.

A rajasic mind always wants new things. It wants variety. It gets disgusted with monotony. It wants change of place, change of food, change, in short, of everything. But you should train the mind to stick to one thing. You should not complain of monotony. You should have patience, adamantine will and untiring persistence, then only can you succeed in yoga. He who wants something new always is quite unfit for yoga. You should stick to one place, one spiritual preceptor, one method, one system of yoga. That is the way to positive success.

Uncongenial atmosphere, unfavourable environment and obstacles will only help you in carrying on the struggle more vigorously and diligently. You will evolve quickly and develop strong will-power and great power of endurance.

Physiologists say that the functions of the organs are controlled by the nerves and nervous system. Psychologists say that the organs, etc. are controlled by the mind. Devotees say that the organs are controlled by the presiding deities. Vedantins say that the organs are controlled by the inner ruler; that the nerves, the mind, the senses and the gods derive this power and light from the inner ruler who is the ultimate source for everything. This is the truth.

The wandering mind of the objective world is the perceiving portion of the mind; the creative mind is the thinking portion or the thought-producing portion of the mind. The external objective world is the world of objects; the internal subjective world is the world of images created by the mind. Likes and dislikes or attraction and repulsion are not in the external objects of the senses. They dwell in the mind and in the internal images.

Sometimes the mind thinks of words and their meaning, and at other times it thinks of objects. When you attempt to have one-pointedness of mind, you must make the mind not think of objects nor the words and their meaning. Stop the mind from wandering in the objective world through tratak, japa, worship and pranayama. In the subjective world wage war against the image-producing mind either by the raja yoga method of stopping all mental modifications or the method of self-analysis and enquiry, the method of jnana yogis.

It is very very difficult to understand the mind of a man, even though you move with him very closely for years together. It is also very difficult to understand one's own mind. Mind is such a devil or mischievous imp. It is the Mara that tempted Buddha, the Satan that allured Jesus, the Kama who disturbed Siva when he was in deep meditation and the ghost of lust that spoiled the austerity of Vishvamitra.

Despite your strenuous efforts and rigorous sadhana this mysterious world will overpower you. Be on the alert. Earn the spiritual wealth of liberation. Rise above temptation. Rise above good and evil. Live in the Lord. Live within the iron fortress of the company of wise sages. No temptation can penetrate this.

The mind which ever rises and falls with the ebb of desires, fancies this illusory universe to be true because of its ignorance; but should it be informed of the real nature of this world it will know it to be Brahman itself.

Purification of Mind

> *The mind becomes pure by cultivating habits of friendliness, compassion, contentedness and indifference towards happiness, misery, virtue and vice.* (I-33)

When one shows friendliness towards all those who are found in the enjoyments of pleasures, the dirt of envy leaves him. When the mind shows compassion towards those who are suffering from pain, when the wish to remove the miseries of others as if they were his own arises, the dirt of the desire to do evil to others is removed. Whoever shows complacency towards those who are virtuously inclined beings, the dirt of envy is removed from his mind. Whoever shows indifference towards the vicious, taking the middle path and not taking sides, the dirt of impatience is removed from his mind.

By this removal of the characteristics of the qualities of disturbing energy (rajas) and inertia (tamas), the characteristics of essential purity (sattva) manifest themselves. One becomes possessed of a very high manifestation of essential purity. The mind becomes inclined to the restraint of mental modifications, because this enlightenment is natural to that state. When the mind becomes pure it attains the state of steadiness and becomes one-pointed. If these moral qualities are not cultivated, the means cannot lead to steadiness.

If you want to enter into deep meditation and samadhi you must have a pure heart. If you possess a pure heart, meditation and samadhi will come by themselves. A pure mind that is one-pointed will move naturally towards the Atman or God. Many aspirants retire into solitude without purifying their hearts, and try to practise meditation. They do not get any success through such attempts. If you want to enthrone God in your heart you must eradicate all evil vrittis (modifications). What do you do when you expect to receive a very high personage in your bungalow? You keep the compound quite clean and remove all the weeds and rubbish. You clean all the rooms and spread nice carpets. Similarly, you will have to remove all the dross of impurities from the mind if you want to have communion with the Lord, if you desire to call upon God earnestly to take His seat in your heart.

It takes a long time to purify the heart. Just as various kinds of dirt and dust are hidden underneath the carpet, so also various kinds of impurities are hidden in the different corners of the mind. When you clean a closed room that was shut up for six months, various kinds of dirt come out. Even so, various kinds of impurities come out under the pressure of yoga when you practise spiritual sadhana, vigilant introspection, self-analysis and keep a true daily spiritual diary. You may be falsely imagining that you have become a liberated being (jivanmukta). These are all delusions of the mind.

It is horrible to hear about the anecdotes of some aspirants and sadhus who pose as jivanmuktas. They cheat themselves by cheating others. They do some japa and meditation in the morning and study the *Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Bhagavatam* and *Ramayana*. They live in seclusion. They take one meal in twenty-four hours and observe mauna (vow of silence). They wear bundles of rosaries around their necks. If you watch their conduct closely you will be struck by something peculiar. If you give them an eight anna piece to purchase some useful article from the bazaar they will utilise two annas out of this for a small packet of tea or a packet of cigarettes. What a shame!

Why do you bother much about a physical bath? Care much for your mental purity. Though a fish remains twenty-four hours a day in the Ganges, still it is dirty!

If you do not clean a plate daily, it will lose its lustre. It is the same with the mind too. The mind becomes impure if it is not kept clean by the regular practice of meditation. You cannot wash the mind with soap and water to get rid of its impurities. Meditation removes the dross of the mind in an effective manner. Therefore practise meditation regularly in the early morning.

Nature and habits can be changed entirely. You should try to improve yourself in holiness, spiritual peace and strength every day. If you are attached to the body and the gunas you will be bound. If you rise above body and gunas you will attain freedom.

If the mirror is dirty you cannot see your face clearly; if the mirror is shaking you cannot behold your face in it; if there is a veil over the mirror you cannot see your face. Even so, if the mind-mirror that screens you from Brahman (the Supreme Self) is not removed you cannot behold the Supreme Self.

If you take pure food you will have a pure mind. Mind is formed out of the subtlest essence of food. If the mind is pure and free from distractions you will remember God. If you always remember God the knots of the heart — ignorance, desire and action — will be rent asunder. You will attain moksha (liberation), you will behold the Supreme Self (Atman) within and everywhere.

Discipline and purification of the mind and the senses (indriyas) are the pre-requisites of an aspirant in the path of Truth and Self-realisation. Just as the coloured water penetrates freely and nicely into a piece of cloth when it is pure white, so also the instructions of a sage can penetrate and settle down in the hearts of aspirants only when their minds are calm, when there are no desires for enjoyments and when the impurities of their minds are destroyed. Mind is a fetter of the soul. Purify your mind by destroying desires through selfless service, kirtan and japa. Remove the tossing of the mind by the practice of tratak, pranayama and worship. Destroy the veil of ignorance by meditating on the supreme Self. The mind will lose its limiting and binding power and you will attain Self-realisation or liberation.

Why do you bother much about initiation? Purify yourself. The ground must be well-prepared first. Get the moral qualifications of brahmacharya, truthfulness, etc., then initiation will come by itself.

To practise meditation or contemplation with a mind unprepared by non-adherence to the moral precepts, is like building a house on a rotten foundation. You may build up the house, but it will surely fall. You may practise meditation for many years but you will not realise any tangible result or fruit if you have no ethical training as a foundation. Therefore, mental purity, through ethical training, is of paramount importance if you wish to achieve success in meditation and samadhi. Before you attempt to practise meditation you must lead the necessary strict moral life. You must have the necessary right understanding. Then only you will have sanguine success in meditation. Much more time is required in the preparation of the mind for meditation than for the actual practice.

Moral excellence or ethical perfection is not, however, the final goal of the yogi. It is only a means to the attainment of the end of life. Ethical development is more difficult than the attainment of intellectual eminence, because the truths can only be grasped by that yogi who possesses a pure or untainted heart.

Man attains some purity of mind as a result of the accumulated virtuous actions of many past births and by performing his daily duties that are prescribed in the scriptures, without expectations of fruits. The purity of mind generates dispassion in his mind. He gets some control over his mind. He becomes selfless. His heart is filled with mercy and pure love. He shares what he has with others. He takes immense delight in serving others. His egoism and arrogance slowly disappear. He sees the defects in the sensual objects and in the worldly life. He gets deep yearning for liberation from the round of births and deaths. Discrimination between the real and the unreal and indifference to the enjoyment of sensual objects dawn in his mind. He approaches a guru and begins to study the *Upanishads* at his lotus feet. He serves him whole-heartedly. He reflects and meditates on the significance of 'Tat tvam asi' (That thou art) and attains Self-realisation eventually.

A goldsmith once approached a sadhu for initiation. The sadhu said: "Wait, I will initiate you after some time." The goldsmith pressed the sadhu again and again on several occasions for quick initiation. The sadhu totally declined and went away. He, however, visited the goldsmith after a couple of years with his begging bowl containing some mud, hair, urine and excreta and asked him for alms. The goldsmith brought out nice sweetmeats, (kheer, halva, etc.). He had prepared nice dishes as he thought that he would be initiated this time by the sadhu. The sadhu said to him: "Put everything in my bowl." The goldsmith said: "How can I place them, Swamiji, in this dirty bowl? Kindly clean the bowl and bring it to me — I will then place all the nice preparations." The sadhu replied: "When such is the case with this bowl, how can I place the pure Lord in your heart which is filled with various impurities, of lust, anger, pride, greed, etc.? How can I initiate you now, when your mind is very dirty like this bowl?" The goldsmith got distressed and went away in shame. He then purified himself through charity, selfless service, etc., and got initiated by the sadhu later.

The Two Wings of the Mind-bird

If you cut down the two wings of a bird, it will not fly. It will drop down. But still, it will flutter about a bit here and there. After some time it will become absolutely quiet. Even so, the mind will become perfectly quiet and thoughtless if you cut its two wings. What are its two wings? It thinks of the past — this is one wing. The memory of pleasure comes into the mind through the force of samskaras (past impressions). Then you are attached to these pleasant objects. Then you scheme and plan for attaining those pleasure-objects. Then you exert. During exertion, you favour some through the emotion of love and disfavour others through the force of the emotion of hatred. You get pleasure and pain as a result of virtuous and vicious actions. Thus the six-spoked wheel of samsara viz., love, hate, pleasure, pain, sin and virtue, is incessantly moving about. This constant movement does not disturb a bit the thoughtless worldly-minded persons, who are happy when they get a few ginger biscuits, bread, jam and some money. A yogi is much disturbed and he tries his level best to stop this mental current.

The other wing of the mind-bird is planning for the future. Do not plan and scheme for the future. Be free as the bird and the atmospheric air. Watch the vrittis. Crush them in the bud. Do not fulfil your desires. This is the great secret. Reject them. Desire is fuel for the mind. Thought is fire. The fire (thought) is kept up by the fuel (desire). Thought and desire co-exist. Withdraw the fuel-desire, the fire of thought will be slowly extinguished. Then annihilation of mind will supervene. The mind will be absorbed in Brahman. The mind will melt in Brahman in silence, just as a toy made up of salt melts when put in water.

Control Thoughts

The mind is a mischievous imp. It is like a jumping monkey. It must be disciplined daily. Then it will gradually come under your control. It is only by the practical training of your mind that you can prevent bad thoughts and actions from arising and can ward off bad thoughts and actions that have arisen. It is only by practical training of your mind that you can encourage good thoughts and actions to arise, and can sustain good thoughts and actions when they have arisen.

O truant mind! O mischievous imp! I am tired of giving you admonitions. You are like the strolling street dog; the dog is pelted with stones and beaten with shoes severely and yet it again goes to the doors of people. You are like the shameless son-in-law who sits idly in the house of his father-in-law, eats and drinks, bearing all rebukes and broom beatings!

Thinking starts the process of creation. Thinking means externalisation or objectification, differentiation, quality and multiplicity. Mark how one thought expands into many thoughts in a short time. For instance, suppose you get the idea to give a tea-party for your friends. One thought of 'tea' invites instantaneously the thoughts of sugar, milk, tea-cups, tables, chairs, table-cloth, napkins, spoons, cakes, biscuits, etc. So this world is nothing but the expansion of thoughts. The expansion of thoughts of the mind towards the objects is bondage. Renunciation of thought is liberation. You must be ever watchful in nipping the thoughts in the bud. Then only you will be really happy. Mind tricks and plays. You must understand its nature, ways and habits. Then only can you control it very easily.

The fewer the desires, the lesser the thoughts. Become absolutely desireless. The wheel of mind will stop entirely. If you reduce your wants, if you do not try to fulfil your desires and try to eradicate them one by one your thoughts will diminish in frequency and length. The number of thoughts also per minute will diminish. The fewer the thoughts, the greater the peace. Remember this always. A wealthy man who is engaged in speculation in a big city and who has a large number of thoughts has a restless mind in spite of his comforts, whereas a sadhu who lives in a cave of the Himalayas and who is practising thought-control is very happy in spite of his poverty.

The fewer the thoughts, the greater the mental strength and concentration. Suppose that the average number of thoughts that pass through your brain within one hour is one hundred. If you succeed in reducing it to ninety by constant practice of concentration and meditation you have gained ten percent of the power of concentration of mind. Every thought that is reduced adds strength and peace to the mind. Reduction of even one thought will give mental strength and peace of mind. You may not be able to feel this in the beginning as you do not possess a subtle intellect; but there is a spiritual thermometer inside to register the reduction of even a single thought. If you reduce one thought, the mental strength that you have gained by this reduction will help you to reduce the second thought easily.

Just as you close your door or gate when a dog or an ass tries to come in, so also close your mind before any evil thought can enter and produce an impression on your physical brain. You will become wise soon and attain eternal infinite peace and bliss.

Wipe out lust, greed and egoism. Entertain only pure holy thoughts. Though this is a difficult task you will have to practise it. You will succeed in your attempt after some time. Destruction of one evil thought will give you strength to annihilate other evil thoughts and will develop your soul-force or will-power. Never despair though you may fail in crushing a bad thought. No pains, no gains. Inner spiritual strength will gradually manifest in you. You can feel this.

Passion, egoism, jealousy, pride and hatred are very, very deep-rooted. If you cut the branches of a tree, they grow again after some time. Even so, though these vrittis are suppressed or thinned out, they manifest again after some time. They should be completely rooted out by strenuous efforts, right thinking and meditation, etc.

In the rubber plantations planters take recourse to the method of thinning out the rubber trees by cutting the small surplus trees which stand in the vicinity of big trees. By so doing they can tap more milk (rubber juice) from the big trees. Even so, you must thin out thoughts by destroying them one by one in order to drink the ambrosial milk or nectar of immortality.

Control your thoughts. Just as you retain only the good fruits from the basket and discard the bad ones, so also keep good thoughts in your mind and reject evil ones.

Just as the warrior chops off the heads of enemies one by one when they come out of a fortress through a trap-door, so also chop off the thoughts one by one when they emerge out through the trap-door to the surface of the mind.

Just as fruit is born of the seed, so also deeds are born of thoughts. Good thoughts generate good actions. Evil thoughts produce evil actions. Harbour good thoughts and repel evil thoughts. If you cultivate good thoughts by satsang, study of religious books and prayer etc., evil thoughts will die of themselves.

Just as you remove at once the pebble in your shoe that troubles you, so also you must be able to remove at once any tormenting thought from your mind. Then only have you gained sufficient strength in the control of thought. Then only have you attained some real progress in the spiritual path.

When you give a blow on the head of a snake with a stick and crush its head, it remains absolutely motionless for some time. You think it is dead. All of a sudden it raises its head and runs away. Even so, the thoughts that were once crushed and suppressed by you regain strength and raise their heads. They must be destroyed totally beyond resurrection.

When the tail of a lizard is cut, the cut end will flutter about for some time, as there is still a little residual prana in the tail. After one or two minutes all motion will cease. Even so, even after thinning and reducing the thoughts, some thoughts will move about like the tail of the lizard, but they are powerless. They cannot do any serious harm. There is no vitality in them. Just as the drowning man tries to catch anything to save himself, so also these lifeless thoughts try their level best to come back to their previous state of life and vigour. If you go on regularly with your daily practice of meditation, they will die by themselves like a ghee-less lamp.

Identify yourself with the immortal Self. Enquire "Who am I?" whenever thoughts arise in your mind. All the thoughts will gradually die.

It is the mind that is the root-cause of the tree of worldly existence with its thousands of shoots, branches, tender leaves and fruits. If you can annihilate the thoughts you can destroy this tree at once. Destroy thought as soon as it arises. The root will dry up through the annihilation of thoughts and the tree of worldly existence will wither soon. This demands considerable patience and perseverance. You will be bathed in the ocean of bliss when all thoughts are extirpated. This state is indescribable. You will have to feel it yourself.

Just as the fire is absorbed into its source when the fuel is burnt out, so also the mind is absorbed into its source — the Atman — when all thoughts are annihilated. Then one attains kaivalya or the state of absolute independence. All thoughts cannot be destroyed in a day or two. The process of destruction of mental modifications is difficult and long. You should not give up the practice of destroying the thoughts in the middle when you come across some difficulties or stumbling blocks. Your first attempt should be the reduction of thoughts. Reduce your wants and desires. The thoughts will decrease. Gradually all thoughts will be utterly destroyed. Thoughts are like the waves of the ocean. They are countless. You may become desperate in the beginning. Some thoughts will subside, while some other thoughts will gush out like a stream. The same old thoughts that were once suppressed may again show their faces after some time. Never become despondent at any stage of practice. You will surely get inner spiritual strength. You are bound to succeed in the end. All the yogis of yore had to encounter the same difficulties that you are experiencing now.

Keep the heart young. Do not think: "I have become old." To think: "I have become old," is a bad habit. Do not entertain this thought. At sixty, think "I am sixteen." As you think so you become. This is a great psychological law.

Sit peacefully. Discriminate. Disassociate yourself from thoughts and the mind which is the thinking principle or entity. Identify yourself with the inner-most Self and stand as a silent witness. Gradually all thoughts will die by themselves. You will become one with the Supreme Self or Para Brahman.

Continue the practice of mental quiet. It does require, doubtless, a direct effort to annihilate the mind. You should annihilate the subtle desires first. Then alone you will be able to do the sadhana of mental quiet vigorously. Without annihilation of subtle desires, no mental quiet or annihilation of mind is possible.

A great emperor purchased a horse for ten thousand rupees. The horse was restless. Not one of his horsemen was able to ride on that horse. But his son, Sikhandar, said: "Beloved father, I can ride on this horse." He sat on the horse and rode in the direction of the sun. The horse galloped. The emperor was astonished and said: "O Sikhandar! How did you manage to ride?" Sikhandar replied: "The horse was afraid of his shadow, I made him run towards the sun." Such is the restless horse-mind also. If you turn it towards Atman it will be peaceful; if you turn it towards the world it will jump and dance.

The mind cannot do any mischief without the help of the senses. The senses cannot do any harm without the help of their leader, mind. Desire moves the mind and the senses. The force of desire, or impulse, moves the mind and the senses. It makes the mind outgoing. Abandon desires and control the senses. Then alone can you easily control the mind.

Thinking is samsara. Thinking causes identification with the body, 'I-ness' and 'mine-ness', time and space. Stop this thinking through dispassion and practice and merge yourself in the pure consciousness where there is no thinking. This is liberation while living.

Victory over Mind

You will find in the *Kathopanishad*: *"He who has no discrimination and whose mind is always uncontrolled has his senses uncontrolled like the vicious horses of a driver. But he who has understanding and whose mind is always controlled, has his senses under control like good horses of a driver. He who has no discrimination and whose mind is not under control and ever impure, does not reach that goal, but enters into the round of births and deaths. He who has understanding, who has his mind always under control and who is pure, reaches that goal whence he is not born again. He who has understanding, and who holds the reins of the mind, reaches the end of his journey, and that is the highest place of Vishnu."* (III Valli: 5-9)

Truth dawns by itself upon the mind of the tranquil who are equally good and friendly to all beings. Tranquillity of the mind is attained by eradication of desires and thoughts. Mind is agitated by desires and thoughts. When desires and thoughts are controlled the mind becomes as calm as the lake which is not agitated by the winds. Tranquillity cannot be attained within a week or a month. Practice for a long time is essential.

You can bore a diamond with a bristle. You can tie an infuriated tiger with a slender silken thread. You can bring the sun down for your child's play. You can make the flame of fire burn downwards. But it is difficult to control the mind!

You can even wear a cobra as a garland round your neck. You can jump to the other side of the ocean. You can extract oil from stone. You can make a rope out of sand. But it is very difficult to control the turbulent mind without the grace of the Lord; the prompter of the thoughts alone can subjugate this wild mind. My prostrations and adorations to the prompter!

The world is a very big wheel. It is revolving unceasingly. The mind is the nave of this wheel. Those who are egoistic, proud, passionate and greedy are caught up in this wheel. If you wish to stop the mind from moving, you will have to annihilate egoism, pride, desire and greed. If you can stop the mind from moving, the world-wheel will come to a standstill and you will be freed from the round of births and deaths.

Victory over mind is certainly victory over death. Triumph over the tyranny of matter or flesh is undoubtedly triumph over death. This is the attainment of immortality. This is the goal of life. This is kaivalya of vedantins or absolute independence of raja yogis. This has to be achieved through intense spiritual practice or constant meditation on the imperishable Self.

Mind is your bitterest enemy, always remember this and treat the mind as such. Disconnect yourself from the mind and ever stand as its silent witness. Do not become one with the mind and its modifications. Ever introspect and practise self-analysis, then the mind will lurk as a thief but it cannot do any havoc. It will gradually be tamed and it will become your obedient servant.

The mind whirls like an intoxicated bee. Do not give leniency to it. Keep all your senses and desires under strict control. Separate the senses from the objects. Get rid of all attractions. Control the prana. Close the avenues of the body. Just as you can capture an elephant, so also you can capture the mind now. Just as the soldier kills with his sword the enemies who rise against him again and again, so also you can kill all thoughts of objects as they rise again and again and again.

Tell the mind thus: "O mind, a thousand times I have advised you to stop your wanderings and to seek the lotus feet of the Lord. Stop your wanderings or I shall kill you at this very moment."

Mind is very treacherous. It will hurl you down into the abyss of ignorance. It will say: "Give up sadhana, you will not gain anything. The world is real. There is nothing like sensual pleasure. Enjoy it to your heart's content." Hear not the voice of the mind. Swim against the mind-current. Do not co-operate with the mind in its evil wanderings. Gradually it will come under your control. There is the practical method to non-co-operate with the mind. If the mind says: "I must eat sweetmeats today," say unto the mind: "I will not co-operate with you today. I will not eat sweetmeats. I will eat only bread and dhall." If the mind says: "I must wear a silk shirt," say unto the mind: "I will not wear in future any silk clothing; I will wear only homespun cloth." If the mind says: "Go to the cinema," say to the mind, "I will attend sadhana week," and immediately proceed to Ananda Kutir. If the mind says: "Attend the dancing party," take part in chanting God's names and satsang. If the mind says: " Eat eggs and meat," eat spinach, fruits and milk.

If the mind says: "Read novels and newspapers," study the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads* and practise karma yoga. If the mind says: "Take part in horse racing," go to holy places. If the mind says: "Gamble," practise vigil and chant the whole night. If the mind says: "Go to the club for gossiping and card playing," attend satsang and do japa intensely. This is the method to non-cooperate with the mind. Non-cooperation with the mind is swimming against the sensual currents. The mind will be thinned out gradually. It will become your obedient servant. You will gain mastery over the mind.

You should not try to control the mind through violence. You will not succeed if you do so. You will have to coax it with sweet words, just as you coax children with kind words and sweetmeats. If you attempt to control the mind through force, it is like trying to bind a furious elephant with a thin twine or a plantain fibre. Just as the goad is the effective instrument to control the furious elephant, so also you will have to adopt the approved or prescribed means such as burning renunciation, association with the wise, enquiry, pranayama, etc. to control the mind.

You should first conquer the mind through enquiry of 'Who am I?' As long as the mind is not destroyed, so long desires will stick to you again and again and you will have no peace of mind. When the mind does not think of any object, when the mind is completely destitute of all desires (of body, world and book-lore) you will attain the state of mindlessness and you will enjoy indescribable peace. As long as you do not attain Self-realisation and have not controlled the mind, so long you should follow implicitly the teachings of your guru and the scriptures.

You must practise the following again and again:

1. Destruction of subtle desires.
2. Annihilation of the mind.
3. Knowledge of Brahman.

Remember this point well. Even if any one of these three be practised for a long time, it will not give the fruits which all the three combined can give.

By destroying subtle desires and thoughts you melt or annihilate the mind. By annihilating the mind, you kill egoism. By killing egoism, you know the Self. By knowing the Self you attain Self-realisation. By attaining Self-realisation, you become free from all sorts of pains, tribulations and miseries. You enjoy supreme unalloyed bliss of the Eternal and become That.

Tear to pieces the veil of ignorance. Catch the fickle deer (the mind) with the snare of enquiry and constant meditation on Brahman. Mount yourself on the elephant of Self-knowledge and roam about freely in the hilly tracts of the highest peak of supreme wisdom of the Self.

Listen O mind, to this last piece of advice. Sink not in bonds, in the mire of worldly life (samsara), in the perilous ocean of births and deaths. Mix not in mundane affairs. Eat not the fruits of pain and sorrow. Take not birth again and again. Wither not in wicked deeds. Is not eternal bliss thy quest? Commune with the Lord of bliss now. Forget the body and its connections and rest peacefully in blissful joy. Calmly abide in thy supreme Abode. Now there shall be an end of birth.

Repeat, O mind, the name of Hari! Hari's name is a safe boat to take you to the other shore of immortality. Sing maha mantra constantly: *Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare* This is a triple-strong weapon to cut the tie of worldly life. Soar high in the heaven like a kite. Swim in the ocean of bliss.

O mind, you cannot be my friend now. I know your worth and nature. I was deluded till now through your tricks. We move now in diametrically opposite poles. You want fleeting sensual pleasure from the objects outside but I want immortal bliss of the soul inside. You are ever restless and worried but I am peaceful and tranquil now. You are full of passion, fear and attachment but I am dispassionate, fearless and unattached. You want woman, wealth and property but I am dispassionate and full of renunciation. We cannot agree on many points now. Therefore leave me quickly and quietly. Goodbye friend, my old comrade!

Desires — The Cause of Bondage

What is pleasure to ordinary living beings? In what does it lie? It is in the gratification of desires, in propinquity or possession of things wished for. But are these always possible? We know they are not. How then can everlasting bliss be got from an object that is finite or conditioned in time, space and causation, that is evanescent?

All the activities of life are to realise bliss. Life loathes pain and evades it, and its urge is to make pleasure everlasting.

The cause for suffering is the desire to live and enjoy the sensual objects of this world. Maharishi Patanjali uses the term 'abhinivesha' for this strong desire to live and enjoy. The cause for desire is ignorance. If the root-cause 'ignorance' is annihilated in its entirety by attaining knowledge of the Self, all desires, all sufferings and the clinging to life will cease for ever.

Thirst for pleasure is the cause of pain and bondage. If you want to become deathless, become desireless. If you do not want pain, give up pleasure. If you do not want death, give up birth by destroying cravings.

The cause of all actions is desire. A desire crops up in your mind. Then you exert to attain the object of the desire. Desire is the motive power that keeps up the continuance of life. Desire is an off-spring of ignorance. Annihilation of ignorance, by attaining knowledge of the Self, can destroy all sorts of desires. Desire is the real fetter that binds a man to this world. When all desires are rent asunder by the dawn of knowledge of the Self, there is salvation from worldly existence.

Just as a small quantity of oil will adhere to the sides of a vessel even after it is thoroughly emptied, so also some subtle desires will still lurk in the corners of the mind even though you try your level best to destroy them. These subtle desires should also be eradicated through discrimination and enquiry. Then only will you enter into deep meditation and samadhi.

The action of the objects of the outside world on the senses excites a craving for the enjoyment thereof. Man first exerts to get possession of the objects of enjoyment. He then possesses and enjoys. He then becomes attached to the objects. He clings to the earthly life and gets himself entangled like a silk-worm in a cocoon.

Mind expands when the desired objects are enjoyed. So it gets pleasure. It becomes one with the pleasant objects. It contracts when it comes in contact with objects which are unpleasant. So it gets pain. It separates itself from objects that give pain.

Ignorant persons attribute their happiness to objects. Just as the dog which sucks a dry bone foolishly imagines that blood comes from the dry bone whereas in reality the blood oozes out of its own palate, so also foolish persons imagine that their happiness comes from external objects, while they actually derive the happiness from their own Atman within. They are deluded owing to the force of illusion or ignorance.

Subjective feelings of harmony and discord are the immediate antecedents of pleasure and pain. The external objects first induce subjective changes, such as sensations of heat and cold or the feelings of harmony and discord, and then cause pleasure and pain. A stoic, a disciple of the philosopher Zeno and a Hindu vairagi, through discipline and training of the body, senses and mind, become indifferent to pleasure and pain. Pleasure and pain are relative terms. They are mental creations, after all. They are characteristics of the mind. In the Atman there is neither pleasure nor pain. It is an embodiment of bliss. You will have to transcend the mind to enjoy the bliss of the Atman.

Real happiness can be had in one's own Atman alone. Only the jivanmukta who has freed himself from the bondage of ignorance and realised the Self, is ever happy. Therefore attain Self-realisation and be happy for ever.

Names and forms are illusory. The world is a mere play of the mind. It is only a phenomenal appearance. When there is mind, there is world. If you can produce destruction of the mind consciously through yoga sadhana the world will disappear. You will find the Atman everywhere.

When you possess an object of desire the mind withdraws its attention from the object, turns inwards before the rise of a desire for another object and enjoys the bliss of the inner Self. Even in the daytime you become one with the Atman whenever a desire is gratified. When you enjoy an object you become mindless for a short time. You rest in your own Atman and enjoy bliss. This truth is known only to those who are endowed with discrimination.

Except sages and yogis who possess the inexhaustible imperishable spiritual wealth, all are beggars only in one form or the other. Some beg for money, some for position, titles and honours, some for estates and property. It is desire that makes one the beggar of beggars. When desires are annihilated through knowledge of the Self, this begging will cease entirely.

Hope moves every foolish man. There is nothing which is so difficult to acquire as an image presented before the mind by hope. The hope entertained by a father of seeing his only son once more after he is lost is very, very slender. The hope that barren women hold of giving birth to sons is very scanty.

When a desire is not gratified during the waking state, it manifests in dream. Man does in his dream what he desires to do in the waking state, but which he was not able to do in that state on account of cares, worries or some kind of difficulties or obstacles. The mind has its full play during dream, in an unhampered manner, as the dense physical body is at rest then.

Sometimes there arises conflict of desires. Of two conflicting desires, only one can be realised and the other gets subsequently suppressed. The suppressed desire may again manifest on the surface of the mind after some time and it can be realised also.

If you have twenty rupees in your pocket and you go out shopping in the bazaar, various conflicting desires arise in your mind and you are in a great dilemma whether to purchase a flannel shirt for the winter, a good Parker fountain-pen or a strong pair of shoes. That desire which was very intense in your mind, fructifies at that moment. The other desires get suppressed for the time being.

Desire is a burning fire. It never gets extinguished by the enjoyment of desired objects. It only waxes stronger like a fire fed with clarified butter or ghee. Extinguish this fire by destroying all thoughts. Then you will enjoy the supreme peace of the Eternal. Extinction of thoughts will lead to liberation (moksha).

Have a strong will and overcome environment and circumstances. You can make your will pure, strong and irresistible only when you rise above desires. It is only the ignorant man that complains always of environment and circumstances.

A doctor thinks that the advocate is very happy. The advocate thinks that the businessman is happier. The businessman thinks that the judge is happier. The judge thinks that the professor is happier. The professions of others appear to be good and lucrative. This is an illusion. This is a trick of the mind. Be cautious. Get discrimination. No-one is happy in this world.

A man at Darjeeling thinks that Mussoorie is a better place: the Mussoorie man vainly imagines that Naini Tal is a better place. It is all the trick of the mind. Distance lends enchantment to the view. No more wanderings. Wherever you go you have the same sky, the same earth, the same five elements and the same passion. Rest in peace at one place and think of God.

Go wherever you like, to Gulmarg or Pyalgaon in Kashmir, to Darjeeling or Simla in the Himalayas, to Vienna or the Alps in the continent of Europe, you will not find any real rest. The charming scenery may soothe the retina for a second. Likes, dislikes, jealousy, passion and greed are everywhere. You carry the same mind with you. Imagination and change of places have deceived many. Be contented. Live wherever you like. Discipline the mind and the senses. Meditate on the inner Self ceaselessly. Here you will find everlasting peace. Mind will stop deceiving you now.

There is consecutiveness in desires even though separated by class, place and time, on account of the unity of memory and impressions. (IV-19)

Death is similar to sleep. Birth is like waking from sleep. When you see a friend whom you saw forty years ago, the events and occurences that took place long ago come back to your memory at once, and those that happened recently are held in check or abeyance. This is your experience in your daily life. The same law applies to desire and different kinds of births. There is unity or identity in tendencies and memory. Desire tendencies will manifest as desires; action tendencies will manifest as actions, knowledge tendencies will manifest as knowledge.

There is continuity of impressions as cause and effect. Every act leaves impressions in the subconscious mind (chitta), which cause memory. Memory in its turn leads to fresh actions and fresh impressions. This cycle goes on from eternity like the analogy of seed and tree. In a human body the tendencies of various human bodies only will operate. The tendencies that were produced through experience in other kinds of bodies lie dormant. Therefore the continuity of bodies, tendencies and desires is kept up, though there is separation in species, time and space.

The desires, ideas and feelings constantly change. Some of the old desires, ideas and feelings are constantly departing from their store-house, the mind, and new ones are replacing them. This constant change does not in any way interfere with the harmony of mental operations. Only some of the old desires, ideas and feelings depart. Those that remain work in healthy co-operation and concord with the new arrivals. The new arrivals are strongly magnetised by the old ones. They both work in harmony, and this harmony retains the identity of the mental existence.

There is a continuous flow of impure desires from the mind towards objects. The current should be diverted through exertion to the pure path of japa, meditation (dhyana), enquiry (vichara), satsang and study of religious books.

Vasanas — Subtle Desires

The mind is born of sattva (purity). Hence it is pure. But it is rendered impure on account of subtle desires (vasanas); it is rendered dirty by its wandering in this world in the sensual grooves in company with the sensual jiva and tasting the various sensuous objects.

The water of a lake is agitated in two ways. Winds blow and raise the waves. This is one way. Bubbles rise from the bottom of the lake, come to the surface and burst out. This is another way. Even so, the mind-lake is agitated in two ways, from without and from within. The mind joins with senses, comes in contact with the external objects and is perturbed. Hidden subtle desires and latent tendencies agitate the mind within.

> *They (the vasanas, or subtle desires) are beginningless, as the desire to live is eternal.* (IV-10)

Desires have no beginning and end. Every being has 'clinging' to this physical life. This 'will to live' is eternal. Experiences also are without any beginning. You cannot think of a time when this feeling of 'aham' or 'I' has not existed. This 'I' exists continuously without any interruption. From this we can very easily infer that there have been previous births for us.

The happiness of a baby which is inferred from smiles should be considered as a proof of a previous life. Also, how could there be fear of death and desire to avoid pain in any being who has only been born, if he has had no experience of liability to death, it being understood that desire to avoid anything is only caused by remembrance suffered in consequence thereof? Nothing which is inherent in anything stands in need of a cause. How should it be that a child, who has not experienced his liability to death in the present life, should, as he may be falling away from the mother's lap, begin to tremble and hold with his hands tightly the necklace hanging on her breast? How is it that such a child should experience the fear of death, which can only be caused by the memory of the pain consequent upon aversion to death, whose existence is inferred by the trembling of the child?

> *Being held together by cause, effect, substratum and support, the vasanas disappear on the disappearance of these (cause, effect).* (IV-11)

Subtle desires produce action. Actions strengthen the desires. These both produce impressions in the subconscious. These impressions or tendencies again produce desire, memory and action. When the contact of the senses with the objects are all destroyed, all desires will doubtless be destroyed.

Wherever there is desire, there is the world. Wherever there is peace, there is no passion. Wherever there is passion, there is no peace. Wherever there is attachment, there is no freedom. Wherever there is freedom, there is no attachment. Wherever there is vasana, there is no perfection. Wherever there is perfection, there is no vasana. Therefore, go beyond desire by cultivating discrimination and dispassion and by meditating on Brahman (the Supreme Self) and be happy.

That which appears to be sweet and pleasant is no longer so after it comes under possession and enjoyment. Mind deludes and deceives human beings. Just as dark clouds hide the sun, so also the clouds of egoism and subtle desires hide the sun of wisdom (Atman). If they are in the mind, bondage results. If the mind is absolutely free from these, emancipation comes in.

Subtle desires produce a tremendous influence on the minds of people. They overpower them and make them hopeless victims or slaves. Those who are under their impulse move about in the world like drunkards. They have no discrimination between the real and the unreal. They have clouded understanding and indiscriminate hankering after sensual objects. They forget all about the consequences of their actions. They have no memory. Their boasted intellect fails to function when they are under the firm grip of vasanas which are more potent intoxicants than liquor, bhang, or opium. The effect of these intoxicants lasts for some hours only, whereas the effects of vasanas last for countless years. The effects are carried from birth to birth, and persist till one gets knowledge of the Self.

The mind is compared to mercury. If you place a small quantity of mercury on the ground it is scattered in all directions. It becomes difficult to gather all the scattered particles. Even so, the rays of the mind are scattered in various sensual objects. It becomes very difficult to gather all the scattered rays of the mind. But mercury can be bound by a certain process with the help of herbs and reduced to the form of a pill. (One can fly in the air by keeping this pill in the mouth.) Similarly, the wandering mind can be bound by dispassion and practice. The yogi who has bound the mind can rise up to Brahman.

The usual flow of the mental current is towards worldly objects. Where the vision is turned outward the rush of fleeting events engages the mind. The outgoing energies of the mind begin to play. You will have to turn the mind inwards towards the Self through dispassion and practice. In the beginning the mind will run towards the worldly objects again and again even if it is turned towards the Atman. Constant practice is necessary to make the mind rest in the Self forever.

If the chickens and the fowls run hither and thither to eat various sorts of rubbish, what does the owner of the poultry do? He gives a slight tap on their heads and throws before them some grains to eat. Gradually, they leave their dirty habit of eating filth. Even so, this mind runs hither and thither to eat filthy things and enjoy the five kinds of sensual objects. Give a tap on its head and make it taste gradually the spiritual bliss, by practice of japa and meditation.

Alcohol, meat, rajasic food, novel reading, obscene songs, obscene talks and evil company will make the wheel of mind revolve very rapidly; whereas fruits, sattvic food, company of the wise, study of religious books, solitude, japa, chanting God's names, concentration, meditation and the enquiry 'Who am I?' will slow down the wheel and eventually bring it to a standstill.

Do not give leniency to the mind. Keep all your senses and desires under strict control. Become indifferent to the objects of senses by looking into the defects of sensual life and cultivating discrimination between the real and the unreal. Master first the senses and then annihilate the desires. Renounce unnecessary worries and anxieties. Cut off mentally all ties and attachments. This is real sannyas.

Break the bonds of desire. Preserve equanimity in success and failure. Do not manifest any liking for life or dislike for death. Do not wish evil to the man who harms you or good to the man who smears your body with sandal paste. Take as much food and drink as will barely keep up life. Purify the mind. Free yourself from all attachments. Mentally tear off all bonds and ties and live as free as wind. You will surely attain eternal happiness.

It is easy to get degrees in universities by cramming a few books but it is exceedingly difficult to eradicate subtle desires. Their annihilation is harder than uprooting the Sumeru mountain. But that aspirant with iron determination, patience, perseverance and virtuous qualities can doubtless annihilate them all.

When one subtle desire is eradicated, will-power increases. If you have controlled five it will be very easy for you to control the sixth. With the destruction of each you gain additional strength (power). You can actually feel this.

Calm the mind by abandoning desires, observing mauna and practising deep and constant meditation. Master the senses by the practice of self-restraint and withdrawal of senses. Turn your gaze on your centre of concentration. Observe celibacy. Eat simple food. Be regular in your meditation. You will soon attain freedom or immortality.

The mind with half-developed wisdom feels severe pain when it relinquishes all desires. It demands aid from higher souls through prayer. Never grumble when you come across some unpleasant happenings. Feel that Lord Siva is standing by your side always. Feel that you are sleeping in His bosom or lap. Fear not a bit when you are assailed by diseases or troubles or difficulties. Stand adamantine. Face them with a sweet smile. These are tests or trials to strengthen you in the spiritual path and infuse courage, fortitude and forbearance. These are all His blessings in disguise. Welcome them with a cheerful countenance and overcome them one by one. The Lord will give you immense strength to bear them. Feel His mercy in your daily life in all events and occurrences. Then you will grow strong day by day.

Give up thoughts of this and that. Destroy tossing of mind. Confine the flying bird of your mind in your heart through steady devotion, discipline and regular meditation. Rest peacefully in your own Self.

Subtle desires become thick or dense through repetition of sensual enjoyments. They become stronger and stronger through indulgence in sensual objects. The stronger they are, the greater the delusion and infatuation. The whole play of worldly life is kept up by them. Transmute impure vasanas into pure ones through effort. You will get wisdom this very second. Extinction of all vasanas is liberation.

A desire to go to 'talkies' is impure. A desire to study the *Bhagavad Gita*, to roll the beads or to visit the cottage of a saint, is pure. Increase the pure vasanas. All the impure ones will disappear by themselves. A keen desire to have Self-realisation will destroy all others. There is nothing wrong in increasing pure desires. They are valuable assets for you in the path of Self-realisation.

The real satsang is within. Association with impure desires and likes and dislikes is evil company. If you destroy these you can keep good company with Brahman or the immortal Self.

If you have a firm conviction that this world is unreal, vasanas will not arise in the mind. If there are no vasanas, there will be no thoughts also. If the mind does not think at all, being completely destitute of vasanas, then dawns the supreme state of mindlessness — which brings supreme bliss and knowledge.

Even though the previous nature of a man of knowledge has been quite regenerated, yet some relics of old previous nature still continue to a very small extent. That is the reason why the *Bhagavad Gita* says: "*Even the man of knowledge behaves in conformity with his own nature.*" (III-33)

If you wish to enter into the great peace of God, all the worldly desires must die, all the senses should be brought under your perfect control and the mind should be stilled.

The craving-seeds are the root-cause for birth and death. Root yourself in the divine through japa, chanting and meditation on the Lord (bhakti yoga), or enquiry of 'Who am I?' and meditation on the Atman (jnana yoga). All the craving-seeds will be burnt in toto.

Reduction of wants, sattvic food, cheerfulness, satsang, practice of celibacy, burning desire for liberation and regular meditation will take you to the threshold of liberation or the domain of eternal bliss. He who has no desires values this world as mere chaff. He can command the whole world.

O restless, truant, care-worn mind! Why do you wander about in vain after sensual objects? Are you not tired of them? Remember that this world, this body and life are as evanescent and unsteady as a bubble. This world is full of miseries, untruth, deceit, hatred and diseases. You cannot enjoy an iota of happiness here. Be sure of this. Open your eyes now. Take refuge at the lotus feet of Hari and rest in peace. Enjoy the wealth of the three worlds. Drink the nectar of devotion and become immortal.

O mind, why do you roam about aimlessly like a pariah dog? What have you gained by this? Give up desire. Go back to your original sweet home — the immortal abode of eternal bliss — and be happy.

Desire nothing. Hope nothing. Anticipate nothing. Fear nothing. You are invincible. You are the light of lights. You are the sun of suns. If the sun can radiate so much life and light to the whole world, what about the source of the sun, the sun of suns? Feel this and become a centre of life, joy, peace and bliss, and shine as the sun of suns.

Vairagya — Dispassion

> *Their control is brought about by practice (abhyasa) and non-attachment (vairagya).* (I-12)

To destroy the painful and pleasant vrittis, Patanjali Maharishi suggests abhyasa (practice) and vairagya (dispassion or indifference to enjoyments herein and hereafter). Through these the painful vrittis are to be controlled and good thoughts are generated. The same thing is said by the Lord in the *Bhagavad Gita* also. Arjuna says to the Lord: "*The mind is impetuous like the wind. Just as it is difficult to catch hold of the wind with a pair of tongs, so also it is difficult to control the mind.*" Lord Krishna says: "*Control this impetuous mind through practice and dispassion.*" Dispassion is the most essential factor. You can develop it by finding out defects in sensual life. The mind is filled with sensual samskaras. It is very difficult to wean the mind from the objects. The method is to remember the description of the world given by the Lord in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "*This world is impermanent, full of sufferings, the abode of sorrow.*" All the sensual pleasures appear to be pleasant in the beginning, but in the end they are like poison.

Remember also the *Vairagya Dindima* of Sankaracharya: "*Desire, anger and greed are the thieves lurking in the mind; the jewel of wisdom is plundered by these dacoits. Therefore wake up, O man, from this samsara... Wake up; life is waning; you are caught up in this wheel of samsara. You are roasted by various kinds of anxieties and expectations. You do not realise it but this life is gradually waning away.*" Constantly dwell on these thoughts and you will gradually develop dispassion, without which you cannot have spiritual progress.

Through dispassion you will have to check the out-going pleasure-seeking vrittis and through practice you will have to cut a new spiritual path for the mind to move on. Dispassion serves the part of a dam in the river of pleasure-seeking vrittis. It forms a strong embankment. It does not allow them to pass outside. Dispassion removes obstacles; practice gives liberation. Without vrittis one cannot enjoy sensual objects. If the vrittis along with the latent tendencies are destroyed, annihilation of the mind follows.

Here is a gloss of Vyasa: "*The stream of mind flows both ways — towards good and towards evil. That which flows on to perfect independence, down the plane of discriminative knowledge, is named the stream of happiness. That which leads to rebirth and the flow down the plane of ignorance, is the stream of sin. Among those, the flow towards objects is thinned by desirelessness; the flow of discrimination is rendered visible by habituating the mind to the experience of knowledge. Hence the suppression of the mental modifications is dependent upon both.*"

Abhyasa — Practice

The effort to steady the mind by any means is abhyasa. (I-13)

The effort to restrain all the vrittis of the mind and to make the mind steady like the jet of a lamp in a windless place is practice (abhyasa). To drive back the mind to its source and get it absorbed in Atman, is abhyasa. To make the mind inward and to destroy all its out-going tendencies is abhyasa. This practice should be done for a long time without a break and with perfect devotion.

If you concentrate the mind on a black dot or any figure, the mind will run away. It is a habit. Gradually withdraw it from the objects and try to fix it at the lotus feet of the Lord. The mind will run away one hundred times today, but after three months' practice it may run ninety-nine or eighty times. Thus will you steadily progress. The mind will soon become one-pointed. You can fix it on the Lord and meditate for a long time. You must practise abhyasa continuously and regularly for a long time. Ultimately you will realise your identity with the Supreme Soul. If you practise for two months and then leave it off you will not be able to ascend to the summit. Regularity is of paramount importance. Let it be even for ten minutes. You must be regular in your daily practice. Practice during brahmamuhurta (the period of an hour and a half before sunrise). This time is best suited for daily meditation.

The Mind and the Senses

The individual soul sits on the marvellous car of the mind, passes through the gateway of the ear in the twinkling of an eye and enjoys various kinds of music of the world. He holds the reins of the nerves of sensation, enters the domain of touch through the portals of skin and enjoys the diverse kinds of soft objects. He roams about in the hills of beautiful forms and enjoys them through the windows of his eyes. He enters into the cave of taste by the avenue of tongue and enjoys dainties and palatable dishes and refreshing beverages. He enters the forest of scents through the doors of his nose and enjoys them to his heart's content.

The ears hear sounds through the intelligence of the Atman. The eyes perceive objects through the intelligence of the Atman. The tongue tastes objects through the intelligence of the Atman. The Atman is the director of the five senses of knowledge. The Atman is the ear of ears, eye of eyes, tongue of tongues. The Atman is the potent magnet. If you know the hidden, all-powerful, all-wise Director, if you have direct intuitive perception of this Atman by the practice of meditation, you will cross the ocean of samsara, you will attain immortality, eternal bliss and everlasting peace.

Through the practice of yoga you can undoubtedly acquire the power of seeing, hearing and knowing without the help of the outer senses. A yogi can actually visualise the dynamic and beneficial effects produced on the mind and body, through his inner eye.

The actual contact of objects with the eyes and the ears is not necessary for perception and hearing. But in the case of the tongue and the skin, actual contact of objects is necessary for tasting and feeling. The senses cannot do anything by themselves. It is the mind that goads them to action.

When you behold the objects of the senses the mind enters the objects. You find it very difficult to free yourself from the clutches of sensual objects. But if you remain as a silent witness you will not be affected by them. Therefore, remain as a witness of the vrittis or waves of the mind. You will enjoy the peace of the Eternal.

Behind the noise, behind the tumultuous sounds of this world, there is deep silence. This deep silence is Brahman (Supreme Self). If you withdraw your attention there is no sound. Sound also is mental creation. When the mind is connected with the organ of hearing, there is sound. When the ear is withdrawn from its object or when the mind is disconnected from the ear, there is no sound. Sound is a trick of the mind. So is colour. So is form.

The mind is generally attracted by brilliant light, beauty, intelligence, varied colours and pleasant sounds. Do not be deceived by these paltry things. Enquire within. What is the background for all these things? There is one Essence at the back of the mind and all objects of this seeming sense-universe. That Essence is all-full and self-contained. That Essence is the Brahman of the *Upanishads.* That Essence, verily you are. 'Tat tvam asi', my dear reader!

The mind and the senses are naturally endowed with the two currents of attraction and repulsion. Therefore the mind and senses like certain objects and dislike certain other objects. The disciplined man moves among the sense-objects with a mind and senses free from attraction and repulsion. The disciplined man has a very strong will. Through will-force you can curb the mind and the senses and can work wonders. You will have to develop the 'will' gradually. The more you become pure and unselfish the more the will-power will develop. The disciplined man takes only those objects which are quite necessary for the maintenance of the body without any love or hatred. He never takes those objects which are forbidden by the scriptures.

The knowledge gained through the senses in the relative world is not the highest knowledge. It cannot give you permanent satisfaction and ever-lasting felicity and peace. It is limited knowledge. There is always a sense of a void in you, in spite of your intellectual attainments of all sorts. There is an urge in your mind to attain transcendental knowledge, the knowledge of the Eternal, by which everything is known. This divine knowledge is beyond the reach of the senses and mind. The senses and the mind cannot penetrate into the heart of the ultimate Truth or the Infinite. They are finite instruments. The intellect and mind have got their own limitations. They can operate only in the earth plane. It is through intuitive insight that you can attain this transcendental knowledge.

Roam not, O mind, in sensual objects. Desire not name, fame, prestige, position, titles, honours and rank. Care not, O mind, for earthly affection, love and kind words, respect, nice clothes and dainty dishes, company of damsels and their talk. Remain steadfastly gazing on the Lord who dwells in the cave of the heart, thy refuge, solace, source and centre, witness and abode.

The Sense Organs (Indriyas)

Knowledge is the product of the connection between the mind and the senses and that is why there is simultaneous knowledge of the impressions received through the various sensory organs.

When you stitch a book the needle passes very quickly through the different leaves. The needle after all has passed through leaf after leaf slowly, although the time taken is very, very short. Even so, when you hear, see and smell at one and the same time, the activities of the sense organs are so quick that you think that smelling, hearing and seeing are done simultaneously.

The hand is really an organ of action (karma indriya). It is an organ of knowledge (jnana indriya) as well, to a certain extent, as it plays a prominent part in feeling.

Though the eye is an organ of knowledge, it should be considered as an organ of action also. When one has a lustful look the eyes do a bad action indeed. Through the eyes you see the things of the universe. This is one function. The eyes speak out the condition of the mind. This is another function.

Though the organ of generation is an organ of action, it serves, to some extent, the purpose of an organ of knowledge as it is an instrument by which the sexual bliss is felt and experienced.

The ear and the tongue are organs of action.

The five sense organs are like the five wives of a Chinaman. Just as the wives drag their husband in different directions, so also the five senses drag the passionate jiva (individual soul) in five different directions. The tongue drags him to the eating-house and says: "Give me sweets and palatable food." The ears and eyes say: "Take us to the cinema. Let us hear melodious music and see beautiful forms." The nose says: "Give me nice scents." The skin says: "Let me enjoy soft silk and cushions." The helpless jiva is tossed about hither and thither and becomes restless.

A deer is entrapped through sound, an elephant through touch, a fly through form, a fish through taste and a bee through smell. When such is the power of a single sense, what to speak of the combined effects of the five senses on man? Do not trust the senses. They cause deception and temptation.

The sun never sets nor rises. It is the rotation of the earth only on its own axis that makes the sun appear to rise and set. The one 'wisdom-sun' (Atman) also never rises and sets, never increases nor decreases. Realise the glory of this Atman by closing the eyes, withdrawing the senses and diving deep in meditation.

I again reiterate this point. Do not trust the senses. They are your enemies. They deceive you at every moment. They are dexterous jugglers. Get discrimination. Cultivate enquiry into the nature of Brahman. Associate with sannyasins and wise people. Develop dispassion.

Control of Senses

All the senses should be filled with pure materials. Then only will the mind attain one-pointedness. Then only will it become pure, then only can you attain Self-realisation. The eyes should see the picture of your chosen deity or any other holy objects, the ears should hear the *Upanishads, Ramayana* and *Bhagavatam*, the tongue should speak of matters that concern God. These are pure materials or food for the senses. What is the use of your possessing ears if they do not hear songs and stories of God? What is the use of your physical body if it is not offered in the service of your guru?

How difficult it is to control even a servant of the house. How much more difficult it will be to control the five senses. The yogi who has subdued these mischievous senses remains always peaceful and happy. Develop dispassion and discrimination. Practise abstraction and self-restraint. These turbulent senses will come under your control. There is nothing more powerful than austerity to curb the turbulent senses.

Just as a charioteer restrains the restive horses through the reins, so also you will have to curb the restless senses (the horses) through the reins of discrimination and dispassion. Then alone will you have a safe journey to the Atman — the sweet eternal abode of peace and bliss.

That yogi who has control over the senses is a mighty potentate on this earth. The bliss of Indra and Chakravarthy is nothing when compared to him. My silent adorations to such a yogi!

Tongue (The Most Turbulent Indriya)

The tongue is a double-edged sword. This is the most powerful sense organ. If this is controlled all other sense organs can be very easily controlled. It is a friend of the organ of generation. Both organs are born of the same source, viz., the water-principle, tongue from the sattvic portion, the organ of generation from the rajasic portion. Tongue is an organ of knowledge. The genital is an organ of action. As soon as the stomach is filled with delicious food, the organ of reproduction is excited. Man begins to entertain lustful thoughts. If you are not able to control the tongue and organ of reproduction, how will you be able to cross this big ocean of worldly existence (samsara)? Control the tongue first. Then the latter will easily come under your grip.

O aspirants! Take refuge in your own Self, the immortal soul. Be steadfast in your resolve. Tread the path of truth and righteousness. Watch your mind very carefully. Be vigilant and diligent. Discipline the turbulent senses. Curb this tongue and reproductive organ. You will cross the ocean of samsara and attain immortality and perennial peace and joy.

If you control the eye, if you do not allow it to run towards beautiful forms, all the other senses are not controlled; but if you fast and control the tongue by withdrawing all tasty objects, all the other senses are controlled because it is the tongue that fattens all other senses. It is the most turbulent and powerful of all the senses. Tongue performs two kinds of activities — tasting and talking. Hence, it is a double-edged sword. The tongue is your deadliest enemy. Therefore, discipline the tongue from now, when you are young. When you become old you will have no strength to curb the senses.

Speech is the wife of mind. Just as the wife follows the husband, so also speech always follows the mind. The husband commands and the faithful wife implicitly obeys her husband's commands. Similarly the mind commands and the speech faithfully expresses the wish of the mind.

Words possess tremendous power. By words you can encourage and cheer up others; by words you can give greatest happiness to others; by words you can ruin or displease others; by words the master imparts his knowledge to the students; by words the mother trains her children; by words the orator keeps his audience spell-bound. Word is Brahman or God in manifestation. Be careful in the selection of your words. Use sweet words and conquer the hearts of others. Never use harsh words. Understand and realise the power of words and become wise.

The organ of speech produces a great deal of distraction, disturbance of peace and various sorts of quarrels. People generally talk at random whatever comes out of their lips without thinking or caring. They joke and jest at the expense of others. In the end they fight with one another for nothing at all, for a little play of words.

You must practise austerity of speech if you really want to attain quick progress in meditation. You must always speak sweet loving words. You must speak truth at any cost. You must not speak any harsh word or any indecent word that is calculated to hurt the feelings of others. You should weigh your words before they are spoken. You must speak a few words only. This is austerity of speech that will conserve energy and give you peace of mind and inner strength.

Speaking harsh words, uttering falsehood, speaking ill of another at his back and idle gossiping are the four bad actions of the tongue.

If you guard your tongue you will be safe. You will have peace. Before you speak, carefully think of the influence which every word will produce on the feelings of others. If it can hurt the feelings of others, avoid them. Do not bring them into expression.

Weigh every word in your mental balance before it comes out. Every word is filled with power. That man who has got the faculty of weighing the words before expressing them has got great peace of mind. All his words are powerful. They produce a tremendous impression on the hearers.

Control over speech is as important as control over thought. Use measured words in writing and speech. Lord Jesus was one saint who used measured words in his speech. Mahatma Gandhiji was another example.

Love and give. You will realise the unity of non-duality. Give and forgive. You will attain Godhead soon. Just as you watch every thought, so also watch every word that comes out of your mouth.

Vow of Silence (Mauna)

The vow of silence is a sure means for getting peace. It will give you power. You will have control over emotions, impulses and anger.

During mauna you can nicely introspect and practise self-analysis. You can watch the thoughts. You can understand the ways of the mind and its workings. You can notice how the mind runs from one object to another in a moment's time. You will derive immense benefit from the practice of mauna. Real mauna is silence of the mind. Physical mauna will eventually lead to the silence of the mind. Do a lot of japa and meditation during mauna.

Mauna is death for a worldly man; it is life for an ascetic. Talking is life for a worldly man; it is death for an ascetic. An ascetic and a worldly man move in diametrically opposite poles.

Observe mauna when you take your food. Put this into practice the very day on which you read this instruction. The advantages are many. Practise and feel. You will develop will-power and get peace of mind.

Observe mauna for two hours daily, for six hours once in a month. On Sundays observe mauna for a longer period and do more japa. Keep the day for divine contemplation only. Do not come out of the room. Stop all interviews.

During times of ailment observance of mauna will give great peace of mind. It will check mental irritability also. Energy is wasted in idle talking. Mauna conserves the energy and you can turn out much mental and physical work. You can do a lot of meditation. By practice of mauna the energy of speech is slowly transmuted or sublimated into spiritual energy. Mauna exercises a marvellous soothing influence on the brain and nerves.

You can observe silence for a long time, but if you find it difficult, break it at once. Try to become a man of measured words. This is itself mauna.

The mauna that is observed during meditation cannot be taken as vow of silence; then sleep also should be taken as mauna! Mauna should be observed by householders when there are great opportunities for talking and when visitors come to meet. Then only the impulse of speech can be checked. Ladies are very talkative. They create trouble in the house by idle talk and gossiping. They should observe mauna particularly.

You should speak measured words only. Too much talking is rajasic nature. Great peace comes by observance of mauna. By gradual practice prolong the period of mauna to three months. The study of sanskrit makes some people very talkative and forces them to enter into unnecessary discussions with others to show their scholarly erudition. Pedantry or vain display of learning is a special attribute of some sanskrit scholars. How much energy is wasted in such loose talks. How much benefit can one derive if he conserves the energy and utilises it in divine contemplation. He can move heaven and earth.

To talk profusely for six months and to observe mauna for the next six months is of no avail. Some people become very talkative after they break their mauna. They should try to talk only a little even after they give up mauna. Constant vigilance over the organ of speech is necessary. There will be much peace in this world if all talk a little and observe mauna.

Mauna for a long period is not necessary, and in an unregenerate and undeveloped aspirant it does harm. Keep mauna for a month and then break and then continue. Mauna for even a few days will be of immense help to the aspirants in the control of the organ of speech and the mind. Immense energy can be conserved. You will also feel immense peace. If circumstances prevent you from observing mauna, strictly avoid long talk, big talk, tall talk, all unnecessary talks, all sorts of vain discussions, etc., and withdraw yourself from society as much as possible. Too much talk is simply wastage of energy. If this energy is conserved by mauna it will be transmuted into spiritual energy which will help you in your sadhana.

This Atman is silence. The best concept of God is silence. Therefore learn to be silent. Make the mind silent, waveless, thoughtless and desireless. This is real silence.

AFFLICTIONS OF THE MIND

What are the Afflictions?

> *The afflictions (kleshas) are ignorance (avidya), egoism (asmita), attachment (raga), hatred (dvesha) and clinging to life (abhinivesha).* (II-3)

All these disorders ruffle the mind like a physical malady. Therefore they are great impediments to meditation. They raise thought-waves and bring about the fructification of actions by depending upon one another for mutual support. If you eradicate clinging to life (abhinivesha) the currents of likes (raga) and dislikes (dvesha) will die. If you remove egoism (asmita) the two currents of likes and dislikes will vanish. The root for egoism, likes, dislikes and clinging to life is ignorance. If ignorance is destroyed by getting knowledge of the Atman through samadhi the other four will die by themselves. Actions are supported by afflictions and the afflictions are supported by actions. There is mutual support. This is a cycle like the analogy of the seed and tree. These are the five ties that bind a man to the wheel of birth and death. Ignorance is the fundamental cause. The other four are the effects of ignorance, and are only modifications of ignorance. Pain and sin are ignorance only. These manifest in those who have forgotten the true all-blissful and eternally pure nature of the Atman.

> *Avidya (ignorance) is the field of those that follow, whether they be in a dormant, thinned out, over-powered or expanded condition.* (II-4)

Ignorance is the source of the four afflictions which are only modifications or varieties of ignorance.

These afflictions have four states: prasupta, tanu, vicchinna and udhara. In prasupta they are hidden or dormant like the tree in the seed.

In tanu state they are in an attenuated condition like a thin thread. Yogis who do spiritual practice have got this state. They thin out each evil desire by developing the counter-current or contrary good desire. For instance, anger is thinned out by developing mercy, love and forgiveness. In vicchinna state they are overpowered for the time being. For instance when a man fights with his wife, for the time being the love vritti in him is in an over-powered state. The hate vritti is operating during the quarrel. As soon as the fight subsides, the love vritti will manifest again in him when the wife smiles and speaks kind, loving words. In udhara state the afflictions are very powerful. They operate with full force. Vicchinna and udhara states are present in worldly persons. They bind one to worldly life. He who has tanu state can control the afflictions. (There is another termed dagdha state wherein the afflictions are fried up like burnt seeds. This exists in a full-blown yogi who is established in asamprajnata samadhi.)

> *Ignorance is taking the non-eternal as the eternal, the impure as the pure, the painful as the happy and the not-self as the Self or Atman.* (II-5)

Ignorance causes perverted understanding and the man is rendered blind by passion and various sorts of attractions. He is under intoxication. Ignorance clouds understanding. An ignorant man is a dead man while living. He is a living buried soul, despite his wealth, possessions and university knowledge. To take a thing for what it is not, is ignorance. It does not mean absence of knowledge. You mistake this perishable body of five elements and various impurities to be the pure Self. You think that you are the body only and you have forgotten the real nature of the Atman. This is delusion. This is ignorance.

> *The method for the removal of ignorance is the continuous practice of discrimination.* (II-26)

Discrimination must be undisturbed. It must become habitual. There must not be any break even for a twinkling of an eye. When discrimination operates you will have a complete inner life in the Atman. All the outgoing tendencies of the mind will stop. The senses will be calm. This practice of discrimination is the cause for destroying ignorance, the cause of the junction of matter (prakriti) and spirit (Purusha), leading to various experiences. Discrimination remains shaky as long as false knowledge has not been completely removed.

> *Egoism is the appearance of the identification of the power of consciousness with the power of the instrument of seeing.* (II-6)

Egoism is the identification of the Seer with the power of seeing. The Seer is the Purusha. The instrument of seeing is antahkarana (the four-fold mind — mind, intellect, subconscious mind and ego). The Seer joins with the antahkarana and appears as if he is one or blended with it. The Seer has the egoistic feeling of 'I' in the insentient four-fold mind, which is mistaken for the sentient Seer or the Atman. This is egoism. When you get anger, pain, misery, contentment, etc., you associate yourself with the thought-waves (vrittis) and say: "I am angry." "I am miserable." "I am happy." When the Atman is associated with the mind the experiences of objects take place. Separate yourself from the thought-waves and the four-fold mind and stand aloof as the witness in your original all-blissful nature. This is liberation.

> *Attachment is the attraction to pleasure.* (II-7)

Through the memory of pleasure enjoyed previously, the attachment or desire that arises towards pleasure or the means of pleasure, is attraction (raga). The desire for 'thinking on pleasure' is included under this. Egoism is the root cause for attraction. This is the reason why it is described after egoism. When pleasure is remembered, attachment is preceded by remembrance of the pleasure in consequence of the enjoyment thereof.

Wherever there is pleasure, side by side there is attachment. Why are you very much attached to your wife? Because you derive pleasure from her. You love money; you are attached to money because through money you can get various objects that can give you pleasure. Everyone of us is in search of happiness, but the attempt to get happiness is made in the wrong direction, in external objects — in books, university degrees, wife, money, son, honour and power.

There is something dearer than a son, there is something dearer than a wife, there is something dearer than wealth, there is something dearer than this prana or life itself. That 'dearer something' is the Atman or Purusha, who is hidden in our heart. The search should be made within by withdrawing the mind from the objects, by controlling the senses, and by practising *yama, *niyama, concentration, meditation and samadhi.

Aversion is that which dwells on pain. (II-8)

Through memory of pain from experiences, aversion (dvesha) comes towards pain and objects that give pain. You try to get rid of objects that give pain. Man shuns pain and runs after pleasure in this world. No one teaches him to seek pleasure. The mind is born of bliss, so it runs after pleasure.

Aversion is the root cause for human sufferings. Wars, splits, dissensions, sectarian quarrels and murders are due to aversion or dislike. Wherever there is dislike there is jealousy, which is the intimate companion of dislike. Jealousy is petty-mindedness. It is a great pity to find that the minds of even highly educated persons who preach on the platform are filled with jealousy and hatred. As they are intelligent they devise cunning methods and plans to destroy others, to get the whole fame and respect for themselves. A petty-minded preacher sows the seed of discord and disharmony everywhere. He is a pest and a menace to society, a man of evil. There is no redeeming feature in him. He does more harm than good. Aversion should be completely annihilated.

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* See chapters 6 and 7

> *Abhinivesha is the strong desire for life, supported by its own potency, established all the same even in the learned.* (II-9)

In all living beings exists the self-benediction: "May I continue to exist. May I live on." This cannot exist in him who has not experienced the nature of death. By this the experience of a former life is inferred. This is clinging to life (abhinivesha). It will not remain in a man who has no experience of death. From his fear of death we infer that there had been a previous birth for a man. Even worms have got fear of death. This fear of death exists in both the literate and the illiterate, the learned and the ignorant. This fear cannot be explained by direct perception, inference and spoken or written words. The past experience of pain of death is there in your mind. Therefore you are afraid of death in this life. This is the reason for the strong desire for life.

How to Remove Likes, Dislikes and Clinging to Life

> *They (the afflictions) are to be destroyed when they are in subtle state by raising the opposite modifications.* (II-10)

The afflictions (kleshas) have two states, gross and subtle, When they are in a state of samskara (tendency or impression) they are subtle. When the yogi enters into samadhi they are destroyed like burnt seeds and are dissolved along with the mind in the Purusha (Supreme Spirit) through the fire of knowledge. This takes place when the mind moves inward towards the Purusha and gets laya (dissolution) in the Purusha during *asamprajnata samadhi.

By raising opposite thoughts, the subtle samskaras of afflictions should be destroyed. Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love. This is the method suggested in this sutra. This is pratipaksha bhavana (thinking of the opposite) method. Habituate the mind to contraries. Do always virtuous actions. Develop sattvic qualities. These good samskaras will act as antidotes to the samskaras of afflictions.

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* See Chapter 20

How to Remove Evil Thoughts

> *When obstructed by improper or evil thoughts, take to thinking on the contrary good thoughts.* (II-33)

This is a practical exercise for spiritual development. If lust troubles you when you are practising brahmacharya, entertain counter divine thoughts. Think of the glory of brahmacharya and its marvellous benefits and the troubles brought about by lust. If a desire arises to injure anyone, think of love and its benefits. If the habit of telling lies again manifests, think of the advantages of speaking truth and disadvantages of uttering falsehood. In this way you can remove all defects by developing counter virtues or habituating the mind to contraries.

What is Pratipaksha Bhavana?

> *When evil thoughts arise such as injury, falsehood, etc. whether done, caused to be done or approved of through greed, anger or delusion, of slight, medium or great intensity and in infinite ignorance and misery, take to the method of thinking contrary good thoughts, or habituate the mind to contraries.* (II-34)

If you hurt another man, cause another to commit injury to others or even approve of another doing so, it is sinful. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. If you injure another it is bound to react on you whether in this moment or at a future date. When thoughts of injury come to you, think of the benefits of non-injury. If you entertain contrary thoughts, all evil thoughts that obstruct yoga will die.

You may fail in your attempt twenty times, but slowly you will gain inner spiritual strength. If you send a strong current of anger towards another, it will harm your enemy and pass even to the corners of distant lands and pollute the atmosphere there and come back again to you and harm you.

For destroying the following evil vrittis, raise the opposite good vrittis given against each:-

1. Lust... Celibacy, intense longing for liberation.

2. Anger... Love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, friendliness, peace, patience, non-injury.
3. Pride... Humility.
4. Greed... Honesty, disinterestedness, generosity, contentment, non-covetousness.
5. Jealousy... Nobility, magnanimity, complacency.
6. Delusion... Discrimination.
7. Vanity, hypocrisy... Simplicity.
8. Arrogance...Politeness, modesty.
9. Cunningness, crookedness... Straight-forwardness.
10. Harshness... Mildness.
11. Attachment... Discrimination.
12. Insincerity... Faith.
13. Fickleness... Determination.

Root of Afflictions

> *The impressions of works (karmas) have their root in afflictions, and are experienced in this life and in unseen future births.* (II-12)

The afflictions are responsible for actions (karmas). They goad a man to do works and thereby enjoy the fruits of his actions. Suppose you do a very charitable act in this birth. The impression of this act is imbedded in a subtle form in the subconscious mind. It will give you fruit either in this or in any future birth. These impressions become ripe for fruition, either good or bad, when it is their time.

Karmas are beginningless. In the *Bhagavad Gita* you will find: "*Mysterious is the path of action.*" (IV-17) The Law of Karma is inscrutable. It is difficult to say what sort of karmas will cause leprosy or epilepsy and whether the fruit that you enjoy now is the result of one karma or a combination of several karmas.

A powerful karma, good or bad, may bring fruits in this very birth. All karmas do not produce their results all at once, nor does one karma succeed another. From the accumulated works (sanchita karma) a certain portion is taken out for being worked out or exhausted in one birth. This forms the prarabdha or fructescent karmas of the present life. The works that you do now (current works or agami) are added to the sum total of works. The granary store of a merchant represents sanchita karma. The things that are kept in his shop correspond to the prarabdha. The things that are sold daily represent agami karma. This is a rough analogy to illustrate our point. As a merchant closing the year's ledger and opening a new one does not enter in the new all the items of the old, but only its balance, so does the spirit hand on to the new brain his judgements on the experiences of a life that is closed, the conclusions to which he has come, the decisions at which he has arrived. This is the stock handed on to the new life, the mental furniture for the new dwelling, the real memory.

Ripe karmas produce fruits in the same birth under proper circumstances. Intense austerity brings fruits at once. For instance, Nandikeshwar, Vishvamitra and Markandeya did a lot of austerity and enjoyed the fruits in the same birth. Nehusa attained the position of Indra on account of his good deeds in his previous birth; but he was transformed into a serpent in the same birth on account of his sinful deeds in that birth. The Law of Karma is inexorable.

> *The root being there, its fruition comes through class, life and experience.* (II-13)

The root means the root in the form of afflictions. The results of karma are three-fold. They are class or species, life and experience of pleasure or pain. If there are afflictions, only then will you enjoy the fruits of karma. From this it is inferred that the yogi who has destroyed the afflictions will not have the fruits of karma. Just as the paddy loses its power of sprouting when the husk is removed, so also the karmas lose their power of bringing fruits when the afflictions (husk) are destroyed by the yogi. The yogi destroys these by getting discrimination between matter (prakriti) and spirit (Purusha).

It is not that one action is the cause of one life only. As we see different sorts of experiences, happy and painful, in our lives, we infer that many ripe karmas amongst the accumulated sanchita join together and bring one life. One important karma will direct the course of this life. It will be the ruling factor of this life. Many small karmas will bring sometimes pleasure and sometimes pain. If you do any action, the tendency to repeat such actions (or subtle desires to goad you to similar actions) are formed. If the tendencies are good you will have to increase them through discrimination. If the tendencies are bad you will have to restrain them through dispassion. You must try to do virtuous actions. The jiva can do actions in the other worlds also to a small extent. But generally, heaven is a world for enjoyments only. This world of death alone is the world of actions.

Fruits of Afflictions

> *They (class, life and experience) have pleasure or pain as their fruit according to the cause, virtue or vice.* (II-14)

In Sutra II-13 it is stated that the fruit of afflictions comes through class, life and experience. Virtuous and vicious actions cause class, life and experience. As soon as these three are formed the experience of pleasure and pain takes place according to virtue or vice. Karma has its origin in afflictions. Fruition has its origin in karma.

> *Their modifications (five afflictions of mind) are to be destroyed by meditation.* (II-11)

In Sutra II-10 instruction is given to destroy the subtle form of afflictions (kleshas) which are in the form of tendencies (samskaras). Here, the way to destroy the gross form of afflictions which are in the form of thought-waves, is described. The gross dirt of a cloth is removed by applying Fuller's-earth. The fine dirt is removed by the application of soap. There may be traces of subtle dirt in the cloth so long as the cloth is not destroyed. Even so, the gross dirt of the mind — the afflictions — is removed by kriya yoga. The gross thoughts are destroyed by meditation. In samadhi, even the subtle form of tendencies are destroyed along with the destruction of the mind. Regular systematic meditation is necessary. It must become habitual.

> *Actions of a yogi are neither virtuous nor vicious; for others they are of three kinds.* (IV-7)

A yogi is not affected by his karmas because he has no attachment. He is absolutely desireless. Karmas cannot bind him. He works without expectation of any fruits for his actions. He has reached perfection. He works for the upliftment of humanity. Yogis acquire no impressions from their actions. For worldly persons actions are virtuous, vicious and mixed (a mixture of good and evil actions).

Karma and Environment

> *From these (three kinds of karmas), there is manifestation of those desires alone for which the environment is favourable.* (IV-8)

When one has taken the body of a celestial (deva), the desires and tendencies of a human being will be in abeyance for the time being. Only those desires which are favourable for the suitable environment in which he lives will manifest. The animal desires and human desires will be checked when one has taken the body of a celestial. When one takes again the body of an animal, only the animal desires will manifest at that time. The latent tendencies and desires of a celestial will be under check for the time being. The impressions and desires for which the conditions are not favourable will lie dormant till their time comes for sprouting or expression.

> *To the man of discrimination, all is painful indeed due to consequences, anxiety and impressions, and also the contradiction of the functioning of the gunas (qualities).* (II-15)

Pleasure is in reality pain only. In the *Bhagavad Gita* you will find: "*The delights that are contact-born are verily wombs of pain, for they have a beginning and an end, O Kaunteya. The wise do not rejoice in them.*" (V-22) Pleasure is mixed with pain, sin and fear. Enjoyment increases the thirsting for objects. This gives pain. The mind becomes more restless by tasting sensual pleasure. There is fear of loss of happiness.

Sensual pleasure is imaginary. It is mental creation. It is no happiness at all. For a man of discrimination only the happiness that is derived from Self-realisation through asamprajnata samadhi only, is the ever-lasting real bliss. The very experience of pleasure creates a desire for more. Desires are endless. When the desires are not gratified there is uneasiness, disappointment and misery. The anxiety that is caused in taking care of the objects of pleasure brings great pain. The impression of pleasure that is left in the mind creates desire through memory of pleasure, and brings pain.

Another cause for pain is the natural opposition which exists between the individual actions of the three qualities, sattva, rajas and tamas. Rajas brings tossing of mind and distraction. Tamas causes delusion, carelessness, laziness, etc. Therefore, everything brings pain for the discriminating. Enjoyment cannot bring satisfaction of desires. Just as ghee when poured over fire aggravates it, so also enjoyment augments the desires. Pain comes if the desired object is not attained. Even if the object is obtained, one gets pain if the sense organ is weak and he is not able to enjoy. Can a multimillionaire enjoy palatable, rich dishes if he suffers from pain in the stomach?

Hatred comes towards persons who stand in the way of enjoyment. Too much enjoyment brings diseases. The yogi is afraid of subtle desires and tendencies that are created during enjoyment. This gives him more pain. A worldly man who has a gross, impure mind is not conscious of the pain.

Avoid Misery

> *The misery that has not yet come should be avoided.* (II-16)

The avoidable is only the future pain. The pain which has passed away has already been explained. That which is being experienced now cannot be the subject of consideration here. Just as in medicine the nature of diseases, their symptoms, prognosis, diagnosis, therapeutics, methods of treatment, prophylaxis, convalescence, etc., are considered in the treatment of diseases, so also, the nature of misery, its cause, strength, source and the means to avert it are to be investigated.

The Cause of Misery

> *The junction of the Seer and the seen is the cause of the pain which is to be avoided.* (II-17)

The cause for misery is the connection between the Seer and the seen. As the power of consciousness (chaitanya shakti) of the

Purusha enters the intellect, the Purusha, who is only a witness and supremely indifferent, appears as the Seer. The Seer constitutes all objects that are seen and also the instrument (or intellect) through which it is seen — the senses, elements, etc. Intellect is very near to Purusha. It is very subtle. Purusha is ever-free and full of bliss. When conjunction takes place between the Purusha and the intellect it appears to feel pleasure and pain through reflection. By this conjunction, through ignorance the body, mind, senses and intellect are mistaken for the real Purusha. Because of its close contact with the Purusha, as it is very subtle and as the energy of Purusha has magnetised it, the intellect appears like Purusha, just as the reflection of sun in water appears similar to the real sun. This is avidya, the root-cause for all miseries. Liberation comes when this delusion is removed. If the conjunction between intellect and Purusha is removed, all miseries will terminate.

> *The seen consists of the elements and the senses, it is of the nature of illumination, action and darkness, and is for the purpose of experience (through enjoyment) and absolution.* (II-18)

The nature of the seen is as follows: from ultimate matter (pradhana) downwards to the elements and their combinations, it is all the seen. Illumination, action and darkness are the functions of the three qualities sattva, rajas and tamas. If sattva increases, illumination manifests. If there is increase of rajas, action increases. If there is increase in tamas, there is more darkness, inertia. Intellect, ego, mind, subtle elements, the five sense organs, the five organs of action and the five gross elements are all modifications of pradhana (original substance) which takes the Purusha around this world and gives all sorts of enjoyments for his experience, and finally makes him free when he gets discrimination between the Purusha and prakriti. The real Purusha is ever pure and free. He is an embodiment of bliss, peace and knowledge. He is unchanging and immortal. He has no beginning, middle or end. He is unattached.

Get all experiences of this little world quickly. Do whatever you want to get experiences of this dream-world. But, cut the cycle of birth and death quickly in this very birth, nay in this very second. Now, or never. Never forget the goal, ideal and centre. The experiences will teach you that there is no essence in this physical life. It is all pain. It is all a long dream. There is no real love in this world. You will know that love here is selfish, hypocritical, changing and decaying, and that only knowledge of Purusha and Atman through asamprajnata samadhi can give real, undecaying bliss and eternal peace and immortality. Nature, the elements and this world are your best teachers. Be grateful to them. Quickly get out of the net spread by the illusory world appearance and realise the Self rapidly, with courage and cheerfulness.

> *Its cause is ignorance.* (II-24)

Ignorance is the cause of the junction of the Seer and sight, nature and sight, nature and Purusha. The nature of this conjunction and its effects has been described. Now the cause is given. To blend or unite the Seer and the seen as one, and to think of this 'I', is ignorance. The jiva increases the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' by mistaking the body and mind to be the Self. The mind, which is saturated with the subtle impressions of ignorance, gets absorbed in matter during the deluge or cosmic dissolution and comes back again during projection of this world. Destroy this ignorance. Give up identification with this body and mind. Rise above body and mind and realise the Purusha who is beyond cause and effect, and who is therefore beginningless, endless and changeless. Apply yourself to spiritual practices and realise the Purusha. Do not make any delay or the monkey-mind will upset you.

The Means for Kaivalya

> *Kaivalya, independence of the Seer, is the removal of the conjunction of the Seer and the seen by the disappearance of ignorance.* (II-25)

When you understand fully that the gunas have nothing to do with the Purusha and that the Purusha is ever free, ignorance vanishes and discrimination dawns. Then and then alone will you attain the state of kaivalya or moksha (liberation). The scientists try to understand the external physical forces of nature and to control them by suitable methods. The raja yogis attempt to control the internal psychic forces of the mind. Physical forces are gross and the inner mental forces are subtle. Those who have controlled the mental forces can very easily control the external physical forces.

YAMA

Among these accessories, abstinence from injury and killing, truthfulness, abstinence from theft or falsehood, continence and abstinence from avariciousness or greed are the restraints. (II-30)

Yama is the practice of ahimsa (abstinence from injury or non-violence), satyam (truthfulness), asteyam (abstinence from theft or earning through illegal methods), brahmacharya (continence) and aparigraha (abstinence from avarice or greed).

Yama is the very foundation of yoga, without which the superstructure of yoga cannot be built. Practice of yama is really the practice of sadachara (right conduct). The noble eightfold path of Buddha deals with the practice of yama only. Great emphasis is given in every chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* to the practice of yama. In every religion you will find this to be the foremost teaching.

There is a deliberate order in the five parts or limbs of yama. Ahimsa comes first because man must remove his brutal animal nature first. Even satyam, brahmacharya and niyama proceed from ahimsa. For instance you tell a lie and thus hurt a person. You get the property of another man and thus hurt him. If you are established in non-violence, all other virtues will cling to you. Practice of non-violence culminates eventually in realisation of unity or oneness of life, of cosmic love and universal brotherhood and ultimately consciousness of that which has no second.

These restraints are the great vows, universal, not limited by class, *place, time and circumstances.* (II-31)

Some people have certain conditions and exemptions in observing certain restraints. For instance, one may have a principle not to kill anything on new moon day. When such conditions and exemptions are laid down, then the practice of restraints is not considered to be perfect. They should not be limited by class, place, time or circumstances. The restraints should be practised at all times, in all places, by one and all, in all circumstances. They should be practised in thought, word and deed.

Yama is not a policy or company manners or courtesy, it is sticking to ideals and principles. It is the development of divine traits that will transform human nature into divine nature. It annihilates desires, cravings and evil qualities. It eradicates brutal instincts and brutal nature. It removes harshness, violence, cruelty and covetousness. It fills the heart with cosmic love, kindness, mercy, goodness, purity and divine light. It is the foundation of divine life or yoga, on which the superstructure of samadhi is built, it is the corner-stone of yoga, on which the edifice of super-consciousness is built.

The practice of yama and niyama removes impurities of the mind. Asana, pranayama and sense control (pratyahara) remove vikshepa or tossing of the mind.

Yama, niyama, etc., are the means to the end, viz., meditation. He who does meditation without ethical perfection, without the practice of yama, niyama, etc., cannot get the fruits of meditation. It is like baking a cake of sand in the fire. The sand will be hot but not useful for eating. Energy will leak just as water leaks from a pot with holes. Improvement in spiritual growth cannot be gained by merely sitting with crossed legs while the mind remains in an inert state. An actor can also imitate a saint, keeping a rosary, putting on a white beard, sitting doing japa and meditating, but he does not derive an iota of benefit. So is the meditator without the practice of yama, etc.

Ahimsa — Non-violence

Abstinence from injuring and killing being established, all hostilities are given up in the presence of the practitioner. (II-35)

In the regeneration and divinisation of man, the first step is to eliminate the beastly nature. The predominant trait in beasts is cruelty, therefore wise sages prescribed ahimsa (non-violence in thought, word and deed). This is a most effective master-method to counteract and eradicate completely the brutal, cruel traits in man. O earnest aspirant! Ponder the great significance and immense importance, value and blessings of non-violence, and start its practice now — this moment.

Non-violence is not merely non-killing as some think. It is perfect harmlessness and love also. It is to abstain even from the slightest thought of harm to any living creature — mentally, verbally or by deed. There is no excuse nor exception to the above rule.

The path of non-violence is very narrow, but if you practise in right earnest you can easily travel this path, since you cannot but get the divine grace at every step. The immanent Lord will back you up and guide you at all times. You may not get full success in the practice of non-violence within a short time, in two or three months. You will be established in it only by a constant and vigilant endeavour. The practice involves continuous suffering, no doubt, and you will have to cultivate the practice with endless patience and forgiveness. The path of non-violence is like a blade or the edge of a razor. It is like walking on the edge of a sharp sword. If you are careless you will be seriously hurt, but if you are vigilant you cannot but attain immortality. You have to pay a heavy price indeed if you wish to have eternal life and perennial bliss.

Ahimsa is the means to an end. This end is the realisation of the Truth. The 'means' is as important as the 'end'. If you take care of the means, you must reach the end sooner or later. Keep the ideal before your mind always and stick to it tenaciously. In attempting to live up to your ideal you may falter or stumble down in the beginning several times, but eventually you will be established in the perfect state of non-violence and attain the highest, the only Truth. If you develop this one virtue all other virtues will cling to you by themselves. All sinful and wrong actions are committed by you when you are under the sway of anger. Anger can be easily subdued by practising non-violence. If anger is under your control you cannot do evil actions and you will enjoy supreme peace.

Non-violence is a wonderful quality of the heart. It is a rare virtue. It transmutes a man into divinity. He who is established in it is God himself. All the celestials (devas) and the whole world pay homage to him. Its power is greater than the power of the intellect. It is easy to develop the intellect but it is difficult to develop the heart. The practice of non-violence develops the heart in a wonderful manner.

Ahimsa is soul-force. Practice of ahimsa is practice of divine life. Hate melts in the presence of love. Hate dissolves in the presence of ahimsa. There is no power greater than ahimsa. Its practice will make you fearless. He who practises it with real faith can move the whole world, tame wild animals, win the hearts of all and subdue his enemies. He can do and undo things. Its power is ineffable; its glory is indescribable; its greatness is inscrutable. The force of ahimsa is infinitely more wonderful and subtle than electricity or magnetism.

Non-violence is never a policy. It is not mechanical. It is a sublime virtue. It is the fundamental quality of seekers after Truth. No Self-realisation is possible without it. Through its practice alone can you cognise and reach the Supreme Self or Brahman. Those with whom ahimsa is a policy may fail many a time. They will be tempted to do violent acts also. On the contrary, those who strictly adhere to the vow of non-violence as a creed, as a fundamental canon of yoga, can never take to violence. You must practice ahimsa in thought, word and deed. Practice of non-violence in thought and word is more important than the practice in action. He who has control over thoughts and who has developed cosmic love will be able to get success in this practice, though it takes a long time. Patient, continuous struggle is needed. Practice of ahimsa is really the practice of killing egoism. The practitioner becomes like a block of stone. He develops wonderful will-power.

Ahimsa is the great universal vow. It should be practised by all people of all countries. It does not concern only the Hindus or Indians in general. Whoever wishes to realise the Truth must practise ahimsa. Whatever difficulties you encounter, whatever losses you sustain, you must not give up the practice of ahimsa. Trials and difficulties are bound to come in your way to test your strength. You should stand adamant. Then alone you will be crowned with sanguine success.

Absolute ahimsa is not possible even to the most conscientious sannyasin (renunciate). You cannot avoid killing countless creatures in walking, sitting, eating, breathing, sleeping, drinking, etc. You can hardly find a single 'non-injurer' in the world, but you can protect every living being by some means or other. Walk with the head bent low. Don't tread on small insects. Don't give pain to anybody. Feel compassion in your heart on seeing anyone in trouble. Try to relieve the sufferings of others as far as you can. Compassion is the highest spiritual practice.

According to Tilak's school of thought, if by the murder of a dacoit thousands of lives could be saved, it is not considered as violence. Non-violence and violence are relative terms. Some say that one can defend himself with instruments and use a little violence when he is in danger, and this is also not considered to be violence, but a sannyasin should not defend himself and use violence even when his life is in jeopardy.

English people generally shoot their dear horses and dogs when they are in acute agony and when there is no way of relieving their sufferings. They wish that the soul should be immediately freed from the physical body. Motive is the chief factor. It underlies everything.

You cannot understand the exalted state of high souls. They are unaffected or untainted even if they murder millions of persons. The *Bhagavad Gita* says: "*He who is free from the egoistic notion, whose reason is not affected, though he slayeth these people, he slayeth not, nor is he bound*" (XVIII-77). Ordinary worldly-minded persons judge others from their own standpoint. They also say: "We procreate and kill for the good of the world." This is a great delusion and a grave blunder. Even when they kill a goat for satisfying their own palate, they foolishly quote scriptures: "*Weapons cleave him not, nor fire burneth him, nor waters wet him, nor wind driveth him away.*" (*Bhagavad Gita*: II-28) What a philosophy they preach! This is the philosophy of the demons. This is the philosophy of Virochana and Charvaka. There are many followers of this school of thought.

The law of non-violence is as much exact and precise as the law of gravitation. You must know the way to apply it intelligently with scientific accuracy. If you are able to apply it with exactitude and precision, you can work wonders. You can command the elements and nature also. The whole mystery of nature will be revealed unto you like a fruit in the palm of the hand.

Always remember the dictum or the authoritative sayings of the scriptures. Remember the wise utterance of Bhishma: "Neither was there nor will there be a higher gift than the gift of life." Practice of non-violence which is supreme virtue in your daily life, will help you to attain inner spiritual strength, serenity of the mind and the realisation of Truth.

In the sacred books of Jains you will find: "*One should not destroy life nor permit or consent to others killing living beings, then he will be delivered from all misery. In thought, word and act, he should do nothing injurious to beings whether they move or not. (The movable beings are animals including men, fire and mind. The immovable beings are earth, water and plants.) A wise man should not act sinfully towards earth, water, fire, etc., nor cause others to act so, nor allow others to act so. Intoxicating drinks, meat, honey and fruit of milky trees must always be avoided by the good, intent upon sheltering immovable beings. With vegetarianism the guilt is as big as an atom and can be cancelled by penance, but with meat-eating it is as big as Meru — the king of mountains — and cannot be cancelled on account of its bigness.*".

In the *Mahabharata* (XIII-II3-47) it is said that these seven are guilty of violence by eating the flesh of an animal, viz., (1) he who brings the animal for being killed, (2) he who consents to the proposal, (3) he who kills it (4) he who buys the meat, (5) he who sells it, (6) he who prepares the meat, and (7) he who eats it.

Only the ordinary people think that ahimsa is not to hurt any living being physically. This is but the gross form of ahimsa. The vow of ahimsa is broken even by showing contempt to another man, by entertaining unreasonable dislike or prejudice for anybody, by frowning at another man, by abusing another man, by hating another man, by speaking ill of others, by back-biting or villifying, by harbouring thoughts of hatred, by uttering lies or by ruining another man in any way whatsoever.

If you practise ahimsa you should also put up with insults, rebukes, criticisms and assaults. You should never retaliate nor wish ill to anybody even under extreme provocation. You should not entertain any evil thoughts against anybody. You should harbour no anger. You should not curse. You should joyfully be prepared to give up even your life in the cause of Truth. The ultimate Truth can be attained through ahimsa.

You injure another man on account of ignorance. If you see God in every man and animal, and always bear in mind that God is seated in the hearts of all livings beings, you will not injure anybody.

You begin to injure others the moment you forget to see God in others.

If you do mental sins, if you injure a man mentally, you also will suffer mentally. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. If you injure a man in speech, you will suffer through speech only. A man may abuse and villify you. If you injure a man physically, you will also undergo physical suffering. If you injure a man's eye and make him blind, you will also be rendered blind. If you cut a man's finger, your finger also will be cut. Understand this law of nature. Always do good actions. You will attain supreme peace and eternal happiness.

A worldly-minded man wishes to get praise from the world and tries to avoid censure. He thinks and acts in such a way that all people should praise him. Is this possible? No. Never. Nobody can please the world. You can shut the mouth of a vessel but you cannot shut the mouth of the many-tongued world. Some will praise you while others will censure you. You should have equanimity or a balanced mind. You should be above praise or censure. You should treat praise as the dung of the pig, or poison. You should attain the state of being beyond the pairs of opposites. Then only can you be always happy. Then only can you be really peaceful and joyful.

People have not spared even Sri Rama or Sita or Lord Siva or Lord Krishna. They speak ill of these great divine beings. They attach stigma to them. If such is their treatment of gods, what can be said as regards their treatment of ordinary men?

A white man dislikes a black man and vice-versa. A Samajist dislikes a Sanatanist and vice-versa. A South Indian dislikes a man of North India and vice-versa. A Saivite dislikes a Vaishnavite and vice-versa. A Protestant dislikes a Catholic and vice-versa. There is an inherent tendency in man to praise his own native place, his own country, his own family, his own clan or sect, his own mode of worship, his own religion and his own language, and to censure those of others. This is petty-mindedness born of ignorance. When the heart of man expands through spiritual culture, when he gets knowledge of the Self, these tendencies will perish. Mark how man is in a degraded and deplorable state on account of the influence of his innate tendencies. Still he will not try to destroy them. He clings to them like a leech and thinks he is always on the right path, on account of delusion created by these tendencies. Though he is in the body of a human being, he does the actions of a horizontal being.

Lord Jesus said: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour. Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you and pray for them that despitefully use you. Ye shall be the children of your Father which is in Heaven. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect, for He is kind to the just and the unjust." Do the Christians of present day follow the above teachings of Lord Jesus? Had they followed these precepts there would have been no wars. No nation would be manufacturing machine guns and building warships. True Christians and true Brahmins are very rare now. If Lord Jesus came here now he would weep bitterly when he witnessed the present state of Christians, His own children.

Root out vices. Plant virtues. Develop mercy, unselfishness, forgiveness, pure cosmic love, patience, perseverance, peace, etc. Lead an ideal life in God. Be good and do good.

Immortality can be attained only by performing acts of kindness continuously. Hatred, anger and jealousy are removed by continuous service with a loving heart. Lord Buddha still lives in our hearts. Why? Because he was extremely kind, he did immense service and he was an embodiment of compassion. You will get more strength, more joy, more satisfaction by doing kind acts. Your heart will be at rest even when you are about to face death. You will be loved by all. Practice of compassion, charitable acts and kind services purify and soften the heart, turn the heart-lotus upwards and prepare the aspirant for the reception of divine light.

A sympathetic man places himself in the position of the other man who is in difficulty or in a miserable state. Then he evinces true sympathy and tries to alleviate his sufferings. A sympathetic man actually feels the suffering himself when he sees anyone in a bad plight. Sympathy is a divine quality. Therefore develop and cultivate this virtue to a maximum degree.

Forgive your servants one hundred and eight times. Excuse their mistakes just as you would excuse your children. Share with them whatever you eat. Develop equal vision. This is the essence of wisdom. Violence is a deadly enemy of wisdom. It separates and divides. It stands in the way of realising unity or oneness. Harsh words to beggars, servants or inferiors is violence. To fail to relieve pain or trouble in another is negative violence. To approve of another's harsh actions is against non-violence. Avoid strictly all forms of harshness, direct or indirect, positive or negative, immediate or delayed. Practise non-violence in its purest form, and become divine. Non-violence and divinity are one.

It is simple foolishness to think that you are separate from the rest of the world. You are one with all. In injuring another you injure yourself. In loving another you love yourself. Separation is death, unity is eternal life.

Ill-feelings cease not by ill-feelings, but by love. In thinking evil of others we injure ourselves. In loving others, we love our own selves. Understand the grand law and its working. You will be happy. The law is very subtle.

It is easy to remain without hurting others, but it is very difficult not to be hurt by others. One harsh word breaks the friendship of men who were united in love for a period of twenty years. A little sneering or frowning, a little laughter in contempt or a staring look, brings rupture amongst friends, brothers and relatives. How stiff is the ego! How strong is self-love and identification with this false body, a combination of five elements, a mixture of flesh, bones, skin, nerves, blood and pus. How powerful is this illusory power of the world.

If you want to practise non-violence you should practise self-control to a maximum degree. You must keep a calm mind even under the gravest provocation. You must keep the impulses under perfect control.

Ahimsa is a weapon not of the weak but of the strong. It is a shield not of the effeminate but of the potent. It is really for those made of sterner stuff. You will have to practise it carefully in your daily life. You may fail one hundred times in your attempt, but gradually you will gain strength. Ceaseless practice, strenuous struggle and rigorous discipline of the mind, speech and the body are necessary.

If you can be fully established in the practice of ahimsa, not injuring any creature in thought, word and deed, you are God. You are Brahman in truth.

All beings — men, animals, birds and poisonous creatures — can approach the practitioner of ahimsa without fear and do no harm to him. Their hostile nature disappears in his presence. The rat and the cat, the snake and the mongoose, being natural enemies to each other, give up their hostile feelings in the presence of the yogi who is established in ahimsa. Lions and tigers can never do any harm to such a yogi. The wolf and the lamb, the frog and the cobra will play in his presence. Such a yogi can give definite orders to lions and tigers. They will obey. This is obtainable by the practice of ahimsa. The practice of ahimsa will culminate eventually in realisation of unity and oneness of life, non-dual consciousness. It will enable one to obtain cosmic love.

Satyam — Truthfulness

> *Speaking truth, when established, leads to the bestowal of fruits for actions.* (II-36)

The second aspect of yama — truthfulness — is the most important qualification of a yogi. Truth is the symbol of God. God is truth. He can be realised only through unflinching adherence to truth in thought, word and deed. Truthfulness, equality, self-control, absence of envious emulation, forgiveness, modesty, endurance, absence of jealousy, charity, thoughtfulness, disinterested philanthropy, self-possession and unceasing and compassionate harmlessness, are the thirteen forms of truth.

If five thousand sacrifices performed by a monarch as a mark of his sovereignty over other kings and truth (satyam) are weighed in a sensitive balance, truth will undoubtedly outweigh them. That is the reason why the scriptures declare — "Truth alone triumphs but not falsehood." Even Yudhishthira had to see hell as once he had told a lie — a modified, twisted truth — in a dexterous manner.

A lie concealed by another lie leads to more lies. A sin concealed by another sin leads to more sins. A good or vicious action always brings its fruits. That virtuous man who always does virtuous actions without expectations of fruits, quickly has direct knowledge of God or becomes a jivanmukta.

Aspirants should sincerely endeavour to speak the truth at all times. If they are established in Truth, all other virtues will cling to them.

Brahman is Truth and one can realise Him by speaking the Truth. Even some seekers and monks speak terrible lies for little things to keep up prestige and position and to get respect in society.

This is a horrible mistake. Householders can be excused to some extent. Spiritual seekers can never be excused. If the mind is impure, Self-realisation cannot be attained even if you meditate for twenty hours daily.

The habit of telling lies co-exists with the habit of pilfering. Some aspirants tell lies even for trifling things. The habit of telling lies has become ingrained in some persons. If the preceptor asks his disciple: "O Ram, have you taken quinine mixture this morning?" he replies: "Yes, Swamiji, I have taken already." Ram tells a lie for this trifling matter and on strict investigation he is found to be a liar. Many aspirants pose as great yogis when they know only a few asanas and mudras, when they have read only *Vichar Sagar* and *Panchadasi*. This is also another great obstacle in the path.

Speaking untruth even in jest is bad. Gossiping about others, even in a joking manner, is bad. Give up these two evil habits. You will shine in society. You will be revered.

By speaking the truth always in all circumstances the yogi acquires vak-siddhi: i.e. whatever he thinks or speaks turns out to be true. He can do anything even by mere thought.

Thoughts, words and acts should agree. This is satyam or truthfulness. The inner man should tally or agree with the outer man and his actions. Whatever you have seen or heard, speak it as it is, do not twist or modify. Fire burns everything — it is true to its nature. Water flows from a higher level to a lower, the seed sprouts and becomes a tree, the scorpion stings — these are all true to their nature; but man violates truth, he is ungrateful. He is not true to his essential nature. A wife poisons her husband; sons are not filial towards their fathers; sons murder their parents. This is not truth. They are not true to their essential natures. To manifest one's essential divine nature, to manifest divine virtues, is truth. To be true to one's own Self is truth.

A spiritual man, a worldly man and a moralist have different conceptions of truth. According to a spiritual man, Brahman is Truth, this world is unreal. A asks B: "Are you married?" If B replies: "I am a bachelor," when he is really married, this is an untruth according to the worldly man. If he says: "Yes, I am a married man," this is truth. A moralist cares for the result of truth. If a man can save the lives of many innocent persons by telling a lie, it is truth for a moralist, because untruth has brought greatest good.

Suppose an unrighteous king has ordered a sage to be hanged without any cause. If the life of this sage can be saved by uttering a falsehood, the falsehood is only truth. If the uttering of a truth brings greater harm to many persons, it is an untruth according to a moralist.

By the practice of speaking the truth, the mind is purified of its dirt. It shines like a clean mirror and reflects the divine form of the Lord with great effulgence.

Have ceaseless devotion to truth. Be ready to sacrifice your all for it. You will develop a strong will. You will become fearless. You will draw immense strength and courage from the Atman or the Supreme Self within. You will attain Self-realisation.

The man who can see his own faults as he sees those of others will soon become a great soul.

Do not brood on your past mistakes and failures. This will fill your mind with grief, regret and depression. Do not repeat them in future. Be cautious. Just think of the causes that led to your failures and try to remove them in future. Be vigilant and circumspect. Strengthen yourself. Arm yourself with new vigour and virtues. Develop your will slowly. You are bound to succeed in every attempt.

Every mistake brings its own lessons. Mistakes are our gurus or teachers. Correct your own short-comings. Do not look into the faults of others. It is not your business. Everybody is evolving. God only knows the exact position in which one stands.

Be on the alert. Be vigilant. Be bold. Be cheerful. Be pure. Be kind. Be humble. Be patient. Do not lose sight of the goal. Do not miss the ideal. Keep the vision of your goal clear before your eyes. Live every moment to realise the ideal in life. Correct your mistakes. Realise the Self through direct intuitive experience.

Asteyam — Non-stealing

> *Non-stealing or abstinence from theft, when established, all kinds of wealth approach.* (II-37)

Asteyam is non-stealing. This is also another form of self-restraint. Why does a man steal? He wants something. When he cannot get it by legitimate ways of earning, he begins to steal.

Desire, craving or want are the root-causes of stealing. This is a deep-rooted evil trait in man. Control desires and cravings, reduce your wants. Reflect and discriminate. Think of the evil results of stealing, — killing of conscience, dishonour, pin pricks, guilty conscience, unfitness for yoga, bad name in society, punishment through the law of karma and penal code. Think of the advantages of non-theft viz., honour, clean conscience, reward in heaven and fitness for the practice of yoga. You will at once stop this stealing habit.

Man is not very careful and conscientious. He steals some small things and says: "This is nothing." He drinks the milk that is kept for others, secretly, and says: "This is nothing. I work very hard, I am in need of this milk. I am also an inmate of this ashram. The whole ashram belongs to me. I am also Swamiji's disciple. I have every right to get what I want." His mind thinks up very clever arguments. Some secretly take from the library some old journals which contain some pictures or useful matter and say: "This is nothing. It is only old copy. It will only go to the hands of a shopkeeper for packing. I am utilising it for good purpose." But, he has removed it without the knowledge of the librarian. So it is theft.

Taking blotting paper, pins, paper, pencil, etc. from the office is stealing. Hoarding money is stealing. Eating too much or gluttony is stealing. Ever thinking of objects and increasing your wants is also stealing, in a comprehensive sense. Keeping more things than are actually necessary is also stealing.

The wife removes some money from her husband's pocket without his knowledge. The son also does the same. They argue: "He is my husband." or "He is my father." "We have every right to take it." Such clever arguments help them to continue stealing in a clever manner and kill their conscience completely.

Even a sensitive mind becomes blunt gradually. By continuous stealing we jump from stealing small things to big articles. If a drop of ink falls on a white cloth it will be seen very markedly, but even if a bottle of ink falls on a dirty cloth, it will not be noticed clearly. So is the mind. Even a little dirt, a little theft, seriously affects the mind of a yoga student. He will have to be very careful and vigilant. He must keep the mind as clean as a polished mirror. He must avoid even very little theft in any form. He has to be content with whatever he gets through honest means. He must completely abstain from illegal appropriation, confiscating another's property and other illegal ways of maintaining his livelihood. Then alone will he have success in yoga.

The pilfering nature should be completely annihilated. One should be satisfied with what one gets through honest means. Besides actual illegal appropriation (taking away the property or things of others) the very thought of any such gain should not enter the mind. Hoarding money is really theft. You should not keep anything more than the actual necessity. Eating more than what is actually necessary is also considered as theft. When a man has powerful senses and an uncontrolled mind, he wants many things for his own sensual enjoyment. If he cannot get the objects of enjoyment and satisfy his desires, then the pilfering nature enters his mind. By constant thinking he does the actual theft. Therefore the real cause for theft is too many desires and undisciplined senses. To abstain from theft one should slowly curb desires, discipline the senses and control the mind. If one can completely give up the evil habit of theft, then the desired things and all kinds of wealth will come by themselves.

Brahmacharya — Purity

By the establishment of celibacy, vigour is gained. (II-38)

Brahmacharya is purity in thought, word and deed. The very idea of lust should not enter the mind. No spiritual progress is possible without the practice of celibacy.

The semen is a dynamic force. It should be converted into ojas or spiritual energy by pure thoughts, japa and meditation. Those who are very eager to have God-realisation should strictly observe unbroken celibacy. Householders break their vows owing to their weakness and hence do not find much advancement in the spiritual path. They ascend two steps in the spiritual ladder and then fall down to the ground through lack of celibacy. This is a sad mistake. They should sleep alone. They should be very serious. They should understand clearly the gravity of the situation. Taking a vow is a very sacred act. It must be kept up at all costs. Man only is the real culprit. He violates rules and laws. Women have got greater self-restraint than men, though the scriptures say that they are eight times more passionate than men.

Remember the advantages of celibacy and the evils of loss of semen. Wastage of semen brings nervous weakness, exhaustion and premature death. The sexual act destroys vigour of mind, body and senses and annihilates memory, understanding and intellect. This body is meant for God-realisation. It must be well utilised for a higher spiritual purpose. It is very difficult to get a human birth. Remember those celibate saints who have earned undying reputation and glory. You can also achieve greatness if you preserve this vital energy and utilise it for divine contemplation. You are not crawling now. You have learnt to stand up and walk. You are a man. Behave like a real man. Observe the vow of celibacy strictly. Let your wife also realise its importance and glory. Get religious books for her daily study. Ask her to fast on Ekadasi and to do japa of any mantra 21,600 times daily. Take refuge in God's name and japa. All obstacles will be removed.

St. Paul said: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Lord Buddha said: "A wise man should avoid married life as if it were a burning pit of live coals."

Ojas is spiritual energy that is stored up in the brain. By sublime thoughts, meditation, japa, worship and pranayama the sexual energy can be transmuted into ojas shakti. This energy can be utilised for divine contemplation and spiritual pursuits.

Anger and muscular energy can also be transmuted into ojas. A man who has a great deal of ojas in his brain can turn out immense mental work. He is very intelligent. He has a magnetic aura in his face and lustrous eyes. He can influence people by speaking a few words. A short speech can produce a tremendous impression on the minds of hearers. His speech is thrilling. He has an awe-inspiring personality. Sri Sankara, a complete celibate, worked wonders through his power of ojas. He held heated debates in different parts of India with the learned scholars through his power of ojas. A yogi always directs his attention to the accumulation of this divine energy by unbroken chastity.

For a scientist a woman is a mass of electrons. For a philosopher of Sage Kanada's school of thought she is a conglomeration of atoms. For a tiger she is a prey. For the passionate husband she is an object of enjoyment. For a crying child she is an affectionate mother, who will give it milk, sweets and other comforts. For a jealous sister or sister-in-law she is an enemy. For a man of discrimination and dispassionate nature she is a combination of flesh, bone, urine, faecal matter, hair, pus, perspiration, blood, phlegm, etc. For a full-blown jnani she is sat-chit-ananda — existence, knowledge, bliss absolute. Names and forms are only mental creations like 'snake in the rope' or 'man in the post'.

Change the mental attitude. You will have heaven on earth. You will be established in celibacy. This is an important method for being a true brahmachari. See the Atman in all women. Reject all names and forms and take only the underlying essence — existence, knowledge, bliss absolute — sat-chit-ananda. All names and forms are unreal like a shadow, water in a mirage and blueness in the sky.

In common parlance brahmacharya is single life. In yogic parlance it is restraint of, not only the sex urge, but of all senses. All senses contribute their own share to sexual excitement. Food strengthens the sex impulse, as tongue and genitals are born from the same source. Sight raises impure thoughts. Hearing of love talk, touch and smell all excite passion. Therefore, all senses must be controlled.

Lustful gazing at women; talking on love matters and about women; gluttony; too much sleep; shaking of the body; aimless wandering and a desire to be in the company of women, to talk to them openly and in private and to hear their music, to use scents of all sorts and sandal-paste, to wear garlands of flowers, to beautify the skin with cosmetics, to wear gaudy dress and jewellery etc., to read novels and use soft beds, to walk with ladies, to look at pictures of women with lust, to look at ladies in a nude or half-nude state, to look in the mirror very often, to dress the hair in different ways are all forms of lust. Abandon all these. Practise purity in thought, word and deed.

Repression or suppression of sex-energy will not help much in the practice of celibacy. What is wanted is sublimation. Sex-energy must be entirely converted into ojas or spiritual force. In transformation the gross form assumes a subtle form. The gross semen becomes a subtle force. This is not enough. Only sublimation gives full protection.

If semen is preserved by the observance of celibacy and transmuted into ojas, the spiritual and intellectual power will increase. This is the fundamental qualification of an aspirant.

Celibacy is the most important virtue for Self-realisation.

There are four processes in the practice of brahmacharya. First, control the sex impulse and sex desire through control and withdrawal of senses. Then, practise conservation of sex energy. Shut up all holes through which energy leaks. Then divert the conserved energy into the proper spiritual channels through japa (mental repetition of a mantra), kirtan (chanting), selfless service, pranayama and study, vigilance, self-analysis, introspection and enquiry into the nature of the Self. Then have conversion or sublimation of the sex energy. Let it be converted into ojas through constant meditation on Brahman, and the Lord's grace.

Whenever desire troubles you, try to attain discrimination by looking into the defects of sensual life. Cultivate dispassion or indifference to sensual pleasures. Think that enjoyment produces pain and various troubles and that everything is perishable. Withdraw the mind again and again from the objects and fix it on the immortal Self or the picture of the Lord. When the mind attains a state of equanimity, when it is freed from distractions, do not disturb it.

A vedantin diverts his mind through the assertion: "I am purity. I am sexless Atman, Om, Om, Om." A bhakta diverts his mind through japa, kirtan, service of guru, service in a temple and study of scriptures like *Bhagavatam, Ramayana*, etc. A karma yogi diverts the mind through selfless service. He keeps his mind ever occupied in some kind of useful service or other. A hatha yogi converts the sex energy into ojas shakti through asanas, bandhas, mudras and pranayama. A raja yogi diverts the sex energy through the method of kriya yoga, concentration and thinking of chastity.

Practice of Brahmacharya

Sit alone in your meditation room in padma, siddha, svastika or sukha asana. Close your eyes. Slowly repeat again and again the following formulae mentally.

1. I am all purity OM OM OM
2. Sexless Atman I am OM OM OM
3. There is neither lust nor sexual desire in Atman or Brahman OM OM OM
4. Lust is a mental modification, I am witness of this

modification OM OM OM
5. I am unattached OM OM OM
6. My will is pure, strong and irresistible OM OM OM
7. I am fully established in physical and mental brahmacharya now OM OM OM
8. I am feeling the purity now OM OM OM

Saturate the mind with the above ideas. Your heart, mind, intellect and soul should feel the purity. Have the word image OM PURITY clearly before the mind. Visualise the mental image. Your whole system — flesh, blood, bone, nerves, cells, molecules, atoms and electrons — should powerfully vibrate with the above ideas.

You can have a sitting at night also. Sit for ten minutes. Increase the period to half an hour. Keep up the feeling during work also. Write down on a piece of paper in bold type OM PURITY six times. Keep the paper in your pocket. Read it several times during the course of the day. Fix it in a prominent place in your house. Remember daily the celibate saints like Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda and their powerful actions. Think about the multifarious advantages of brahmacharya and disadvantages of an impure life. Never leave the practice. Be regular and systematic. Gradually you will become purer and purer and ultimately you will become an urdhvareta yogi. Be patient.

Pray for purity, thus: "O loving Lord of compassion, the soul of my soul, the life of my life, the mind of my mind, the ear of my ear, light of lights, sun of suns! Give me light and purity. Let me be established in physical and mental brahmacharya. Let me be pure in thought, word and deed. Give me strength to control my senses and observe celibacy. Protect me from all worldly temptations. Let all my senses be ever engaged in Thy sweet service. Wipe out the sexual tendencies and desires. Annihilate lust from my mind. Let me be chaste in my look. Let me always walk in the path of righteousness. Make me as pure as Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda, Bhishma, Hanuman or Lakshmana. Forgive all my mistakes. I am Thine, I am Thine. Protect me, protect me. Guide me, guide me. OM OM OM. Enlighten my understanding.

Here are some prescriptions for celibacy:

1. Sirshasana (headstand) 5 mins.

Sarvangasana (shoulderstand) 10 mins
Fasts (on ekadasi days or on alternate Sundays)
Japa 1 hour
Study of *Bhagavad Gita* 1 hour
Meditation ½ hour

2. Siddhasana 45 minutes
   Pranayama ½ hour
   Milk and fruits at night
   Uddiyana bandha morning and evening
3. Kirtan ½ hour
   Prayer ½ hour
   Satsang 1 hour
   Atma-vichara meditation 15 minutes
4. Tratak (gazing) on OM or Lord Krishna 10 mins
   Maha mantra (bhajan) ½ hour
   Krishna mantra japa ½ hour

Keep the mind fully occupied by reading and gardening

If one method does not help you in keeping up your brahmacharya you should take recourse to a combination of various spiritual practices (sadhanas) such as prayer, meditation, pranayama, satsang, sattvic diet, solitude, enquiry (vichara), sirshasana, sarvangasana, uddiyana-bandha, nauli, asvini mudra, yoga mudra, etc. Then only you will be successful.

Aparigraha — Non-covetousness

> *When abstinence from greed is established, comes the knowledge of the how of existence of births.* (II-39)

This is the fifth limb of yama. Parigraha is covetousness or greed to possess and enjoy objects of the senses. Aparigraha is the opposite of parigraha. This is non-covetousness or non-acceptance of gifts conducive to luxury. It is not mere non-acceptance of gifts, it is the absence of craving to possess and enjoy sensual objects. It is a mental state or attitude wherein the sensual craving is dead. Parigraha leads to anxiety to preserve, fear of loss, sorrow in loss, hatred, anger, untruthfulness, stealing etc. Aparigraha puts an end to all these defects and bestows peace, contentment and satisfaction.

One should not keep or try to get possession of anything beyond the very necessities of life. Gifts from others affect the mind of the receiver. As people are extremely selfish, they make presents with various motives. These motives affect the receiver. The mind of the receiver becomes impure by receiving gifts.

Non-covetousness is indeed an aid to the practice of non-violence, truth and non-stealing. When the craving is not satisfied you become angry, you hate the man who stands in the way of your attaining and possessing things. You harm him in different ways, you speak untruth, you begin to steal things. The mind is ever in a state of agitation, restlessness, dissatisfaction and discontentment. Non-covetousness removes all these defects. Dispassion, discrimination, self-control and withdrawal of the senses are aids to the practice of non-covetousness. Aparigraha is the common foundation for all yogas, just as it is the common meeting point. It is a virtue to be practised not only by aspirants, but by all persons in the world. He who has no faith in the grace of the Lord will not practise it.

The practice of non-covetousness has wonderful benefits. At one stroke it removes fear, attachment, disappointment, anxiety, agitation, restlessness, hatred, jealousy, anger, lust, greed, cares, worries, despair and depression. Therefore practise aparigraha and become a dynamic yogi.

"Who was I? How was I? What is this? What shall I be? How shall I be?" In this way the knowledge of his own experiences in the past, present and future comes to one who is established in non-covetousness. He becomes independent and free. His mind becomes pure and everything becomes quite clear to him. He gets a memory of past life also.

NIYAMA

The observances are the practice of internal and external purity, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures and worship of God (or self-surrender). (II-32)

Niyama is the second accessory of yoga. It consists of five limbs or angas, viz., saucha, santosha, tapas, svadhyaya and ishvara pranidhana. Saucha is purity, internal and external. Santosha is contentment. Tapas is austerity or control of senses, or meditation. Svadhyaya is study of scriptures, and it means also the chanting of mantra or spiritual enquiry. Ishvara pranidhana is self-surrender to the Lord. It is the consecration of one's work as an offering to the Lord.

There is an intimate relation between yama and niyama. Niyama safeguards yama — if one has internal purity or freedom from lust, hatred, anger and greed, he can get established in ahimsa, brahmacharya, etc. Internal purity is an aid to the practice of yama. It is an adjunct or auxiliary to yama.

Niyama overcomes all vice and implants virtues. It weeds out all evil traits and implants godly qualities. Niyama regulates habits, and aims at giving the spiritual aspirant mastery over his behaviour. Instead of being a slave to habits he now controls his conduct and develops certain habits by determined will.

The practise of niyama is intended to attenuate the afflictions and prepare the mind for entering into samadhi. It is for the purpose of purifying the mind of its impurities and destroying distractions.

Saucha — Purity

> *By purification comes the disgust for one's own body and cessation of contact with others.* (II-40)

Saucha is internal and external purity. External purity generates pure thoughts. When the body is impure; you purify it. Again it gets impure. Again you purify it. You want to keep the body always pure but it constantly gets impure. Gradually you get disgust for the body which is full of impurities. Since the same dirt and impurity is in the body of others, you cease contact with others. Slowly the body idea drops as you always think of the ever-pure Atman. Attachment for the body vanishes. Lust disappears.

Physical, external purity alone is of no value. Much time must not be wasted in attending to external washing. By so doing you forget the eternally pure Atman. Take a bath in the early morning and wear simple clean clothes. You will get the meditative mood quickly.

Saucha helps one to maintain celibacy (brahmacharya). The practice of celibacy, kindness, love, mercy, patience, japa and meditation will purify the heart and eradicate jealousy, cruelty, hatred, anger and lust. Removal of these constitutes internal purity. Internal purity is more important than external purity. Internal purity makes the mind one-pointed and bestows serenity, cheerfulness, joy, strength, harmony, poise and happiness. It instills love, patience and magnanimity. Therefore develop internal purity through diligent and vigilant efforts.

> *From such purity arises cheerfulness of mind, one-pointedness of mind, conquest of the senses and fitness for the realisation of the Atman.* (II-41)

The fruit of mental purity is described here. The mind becomes inward as a result of the conquest of senses. As the distractions drop away there is concentration of mind. By getting internal purity the mind becomes fit for realisation of the Atman.

Santosha — Contentment

Supreme happiness is obtained through contentment. (II-42)

Increase in sattva (purity) causes cheerfulness. Tamas (inertia) produces gloom. If there is always cheerfulness, remember that you are progressing in yoga. This is an important sign of spiritual growth. Many yoga practitioners put on 'Sunday faces' or 'castor oil faces' when they come outside to give interviews to visitors. They are under the delusion that people will take them for advanced yogis. There must always be joy and a smile on the face of yogis. Then only can they radiate joy to others. Radiance on the face indicates contentment. Joy is the very essence of the Purusha. Contentment brings a fullness of life, happiness and peace. A man of contentment is always peaceful and serene. If there is no contentment the mind is always restless and ruffled and naturally the spiritual practices become impossible.

You will find in *Yoga Vasishtha* that santosha (contentment), shanti (peace), vichara (enquiry) and satsanga (company of the wise) are the four sentinels to the door of liberation (moksha). If you have contentment the other three will come by themselves. Contentment is one of the most important virtues for an aspirant. Riches and poverty are not counted by the amount of wealth one keeps. A king, if he keeps too many desires and if he wants more, is considered to be a beggar. A beggar, if he is contented with what he has, is really a king. From contentment comes supreme happiness. If a man has no contentment his mind will always be wandering. It will be impossible to do concentration and other yoga practices. Therefore contentment should be developed by all aspirants.

Contentment cuts at the roots of all desires. It gives success in the practice of niyama. It gives peace, one-pointedness of mind, serenity and eternal satisfaction. Divine light will descend in a contented mind. A contented man is satisfied with his lot. He is happy in whatever condition he is placed and does not crave for things he has not. Contentment is a mystic stream of joy that cools the three fires of worldly life and joins the ocean of immortal bliss. Therefore develop contentment (the highest of all divine virtues), the companion of satsanga (company of the wise), spiritual enquiry and peace.

Knowledge of the Self will arise only in a man who is endowed with contentment. There is no cooling tonic more efficacious than contentment to cool the ever-increasing fire of greed of worldly-minded persons. He who is not desirous of what he has not got, who is quite unaffected by what he has or has not got and who is free from elation and dejection is said to be a contented man. Glory to such exalted souls!

Supreme peace is the quest of your life. Peace, liberation and immortality are convertible terms. Mental reaction to pleasure and pain will cease when you attain this state. All kinds of likes and dislikes will vanish in toto when you realise this state of absolute quietude.

When you feel extremely drowsy at night, when you wish to retire to bed, you will not eat even if a very delicious dish is offered at that moment. You will not care to attend any musical performance also. What you want is peaceful resting. This clearly proves that the mind wants rest and not objects. Worldly people do not know where to find rest and how to get it. They try to get this rest or peace from external objects. They hopelessly fail at each step. Eternal rest or perennial peace can be had within one's own Self only, through Self-realisation.

If you are in possession of peace you will be able to radiate it to others. You must lead a life of peace. You must live in it. You must feel it. You must establish it in your own heart. Then only will you be a blessing to the world. Wherever you go, those who come in contact with you will be affected by your spiritual vibrations. They will be inspired and elevated. In your sweet presence all discordant vibrations will disappear. All dissensions will come to an end. All jarring noises will be transmuted into sweet melodious music. In your presence irritable people and sickly people will get new strength, fresh hope and wonderful joy.

Tapas — Austerity

> *Through tapas — austerity — due to the destruction of impurities, arise psychic powers in the body and senses.* (II-43)

Tapas — austerity of the mind and body — means that you should be able to bear heat and cold, physical discomfort and fatigue; as well as insult, injury, persecution and any sort of humiliation. You should always be able to keep your mind and the senses ever pure and carefully guarded.

That which purifies the impure mind is tapas. That which regenerates the lower animal nature and generates divine nature is tapas. That which cleanses the mind and destroys lust, anger, greed, etc. is tapas. That which destroys diabolical nature is tapas. That which destroys tamas and rajas and increases sattva is tapas. That which steadies the mind and fixes it on the eternal is tapas. That which arrests the outgoing tendencies is tapas. Desire moves the senses. Desire can be controlled only if the senses are curbed. That which destroys desires, egoism, likes and dislikes and generates dispassion, discrimination and meditation is tapas.

Tapas is spiritual discipline. It is one of the three items of kriya yoga. It is also control of senses and meditation. The aspirant blazes like fire. His eyes become brilliant, his voice sweet and forcible, his body shining and beautiful. All are attracted towards him, he is like a magnet. All these are due to his practice of tapas (tapascharaya).

Tapas is of three kinds, viz., physical, mental and verbal.

Conventionally, eating bitter neem leaves, standing in water, sitting in the hot sun, bearing heat and cold, standing on one leg with raised hands, etc., are considered as tapas. People speak of such persons as tapasvins. They say: "Ram Brahmachari is a great tapasvin, he lives on leaves and has no clothing; he sits in the midst of four fires having the hot sun as the fifth fire in mid summer." Perambulating round Govardhan Hill with prostrations (namaskara) is another form of tapas. Tratak on the sun, walking barefooted, living naked in snowy regions, fasting, vow of silence, vigils, etc. are different forms of physical tapas.

Celibacy, service of guru and saints, practice of non-violence are also tapas of the body. Through the power of celibacy Bhishma and Hanuman did marvellous deeds. Through the power of chastity Damayanti burnt the hunter, Anasuya converted the Trimurtis into babies and Savitri brought Satyavan back from death.

To speak the truth, to observe the vow of silence, not to hurt others by unkind words or harsh words, to speak words that are beneficial and to study the scriptures are all tapas of speech.

Mauna is verbal tapas. One who is observing the vow of silence (mauna) is a mauni. Some maunibabas are more talkative than a worldly, talkative person. They develop a form of lingual diarrhoea through 'ha', 'hu' gestures and clapping their hands. They become centres of nuisance, and boring. One cannot remain in their company even for a few seconds. They cannot help others through beneficial words, nor get knowledge through sublime discussion. After some years they cannot talk even a few words. The tongue gets partially paralysed on account of disease. The mauni is proud that he is a great tapasvin because he has been observing mauna for twelve years. Speaking measured words is much better than such a sort of mauna. Observe perfect mauna for one or two hours, this is quite sufficient. Always keep the balance. When the opportunity comes, talk freely for half an hour and help the aspirants, then become silent. Exercise control over speech through vigilance and discipline. Control through force is not beneficial.

Mental tapas is more powerful than physical tapas. He who bears heat and cold does physical tapas. He increases his power of endurance, but he may not be able to bear insult, he will be easily upset by a harsh or unkind word, he may take revenge and do 'tit for tat'. He has no control over the mind, he has disciplined only his physical body. To keep a balanced mind in all conditions of life, to bear insult, injury and persecutions, to be ever serene, contented and peaceful, to be cheerful in adverse conditions, to have fortitude in meeting danger and to have presence of mind and forbearance are all forms of mental tapas.

Poise, mental restraint, purity of nature, one-pointedness of mind, mental happiness, cheerfulness and cleanliness of life are all tapas of mind.

Philosophically, meditation is the highest form of tapas. Fixing the wandering mind on God or Brahman is great tapas. Enquiry and deep meditation are the highest tapas. Sense control, pranayama, concentration and samadhi, practice of contentment, peace, enquiry and company of the wise, the nine modes of bhakti and yama and niyama are great tapas.

The tapas performed by men with the utmost faith, without desire for fruit and harmonised, is sattvic or pure. That practised with the object of gaining respect, honour and worship and for ostentation is rajasic, unstable and fleeting. That done under a deluded understanding, with self-torture or with the object of destroying another, is declared to be tamasic or of darkness. "*The men who perform severe austerities, unenjoined by the scriptures, wedded to vanity and egoism, impelled by the force of their desire and passion,*

unintelligent, torturing all the elements in the body and Me also who dwells in the body — know thou these to be of demoniacal resolves.''
Bhagavad Gita (XVII-5, 6)

By tapas the mind, speech and senses are purified. Fasts and all religious observances that are laid down in scriptures and the rules of yama and niyama, asana, pranayama, etc., come under tapas.

Psychic powers can be acquired by the steady practice of tapas. Manu says: ''He whose speech and mind are pure and ever carefully guarded obtains all the fruits that are obtained by means of vedanta. By the performance of tapas, all afflictions and impurities can be destroyed.''

Svadhyaya — Study of Scriptures

By the study of scriptures comes the communion with God. (II-44)

Svadhyaya is the fourth limb of niyama. It is the daily study of scriptures written by realised sages, such as the *Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Ramayana, Bhagavatam,* etc. It elevates and inspires the mind. It gives you an idea of your goal and the practices that are necessary for its accomplishment. The study should be done with concentration. You should understand what you have studied and try to put into practice in your daily life all that you have learnt. Practical application of what you read that is applicable to your temperament and to your mode of life is very necessary if you wish to derive any permanent benefit from your study. There will be no benefit in your study if you do not exert to live up to the teachings of the scriptures. This study includes japa, the repetition of mantras. It is also the enquiry into the nature of the Atman, i.e. 'Who am I?'. Constant study and its practice in daily life will lead one to communion with God.

Svadhyaya is negative satsang, when you cannot get the positive satsang of saints and mahatmas. It clears doubts. It strengthens the flickering faith and induces strong yearning for liberation, or aspiration. It gives encouragement and illumination. It places before you a list of saints who trod the path and encountered and removed difficulties, and thus cheers you up with hope and vigour. It fills the mind with sattva or purity and inspires and elevates the mind. It helps concentration and meditation. It cuts new sattvic grooves and makes the mind run in these new grooves. It inspires and elevates the mind to a high spiritual altitude. It weeds out unholy ideas. It reduces wandering of the mind. It serves the purpose of a spiritual pasture for the mind to graze upon. When you study the sacred books you will be in tune with the authors who are realised souls, you will draw inspiration and become ecstatic.

Ishvara Pranidhana — Self-surrender

This is the fifth limb of niyama. It forms the third limb of kriya yoga also.

> *Or, by devotion and self-surrender to God (Ishvara).* (I-23)

Who is Ishvara?

> *God (Ishvara) is a particular soul unaffected by afflictions, works, fruition and vehicles.* (I-24)

God (Ishvara) of Patanjali is neither the personal God of the bhaktas nor the impersonal God of the vedantins. His God is a peculiar Purusha, completely free from all afflictions, works, fruition and vehicles.

> *In Him is the highest limit of the seed of omniscience.* (I-25)

Knowledge, non-attachment, spiritual wealth, austerity, truth, forgiveness, endurance, power of creation, knowledge of Self, and being the substratum for everything and of all activities — these are the ten unchangeable qualities that always exist in God.

> *Being unconditioned by time, He is the teacher of even the ancients.* (I-26)

Success is rapid in attaining samadhi by devotion to Ishvara. The devotee should have total, ungrudging unreserved self-surrender to Ishvara. He should entirely depend on Ishvara. He should not keep any secret desire or egoism for his self-gratification. He should not expect any kind of reward — even admiration, gratitude or thanks — for his services. He should completely dedicate himself and all his actions to the will of the Supreme Being. This is Ishvarapranidhana. It is true devotion and self-surrender.

> *By self-surrender comes the attainment of samadhi, the super-conscious state.* (II-45)

Self-surrender leads to samadhi or the super-conscious state. It leads to communion with the Lord. The individual will becomes one with the Cosmic Will.

Just as the sponge that is dipped in water becomes filled with water, so also the devotee who practises surrender to God is filled with the Supreme Lord. He feels that the Lord pervades his whole being and that he is an instrument in the hands of the Lord. He is not bound by karma. He attains freedom from birth and death, perfection, omniscience, immortality and eternal bliss. The self-surrender should be free, perfect, unconditioned and ungrudging. Worship God with a pure heart and stainless mind, surrender your ego at His feet and annihilate the idea of doership or separateness from the Lord. You will realise the oneness of the Self. Samadhi will come by itself.

If a yogi is not careful, if he is not well-established in the preliminary practices of yama and niyama, he is unconsciously swept away from his ideal by temptation. He uses his powers for selfish ends and suffers a hopeless downfall. His intellect becomes blind, perverted and intoxicated. His understanding gets clouded. He is no longer a divine yogi. He becomes a black-magician or yoga charlatan. He is a black sheep within the fold of yogis. He is a menace to society at large.

ASANA

Asana is steady, pleasant posture. (II-46)

By mild and steady practice and meditation on the Infinite. (II-47)

After yama and niyama comes asana (posture). Patanjali does not pay much attention to asana. He says only, "Asana is steady, comfortable posture. This is obtained by mild and steady practice and meditation on the Infinite. Then the yogi is free from the disturbance of the pairs of opposites." So he only wants you to be able to assume a comfortable posture in which you can sit for a long time. You can even sit in a chair, but do not allow sleep to overcome you.

In *hatha yoga there are various asanas, elaborately designed to give more perfection to the body. These are all later developments. These asanas render the body firm and eradicate physical ailments. Physical fitness and a disease-free healthy body are essential for spiritual practices. Without good health you cannot fight against the turbulent senses and the boisterous mind. Regular practice of asanas will keep the body fit and the mind calm and will give abundant energy, vigour, strength and nerve-power. You will be able to do intense practice without physical discomfort.

The yoga student must practise this preliminary yoga wholeheartedly and with single minded devotion. The means is as important as the end itself. If you neglect this practice and try to jump to meditation at once with the hope of getting samadhi quickly, you will not be crowned with success. There will be a delay in the spiritual progress. Every step in yoga is important. It must be mastered. Then only will you be ready to take up the next step.

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Asanas for Meditation

Any easy, comfortable posture is asana; but the traditional postures for meditation are padma, siddha, svastika or sukha asana. Practise for half an hour to start with. Then increase the period to three hours. In one year, you can have asana-siddhi.

Padmasana: This is the lotus-pose. Place the right foot on the left thigh, the left foot on the right thigh. Put the hands on the thighs near the knee joints. Keep the head, neck and the trunk in one straight line. Close the eyes and concentrate on the trikuti (the space between the two eyebrows). This is called lotus-pose or kamalasana. This is very good for meditation. This asana is beneficial for householders.

Siddhasana: This is the perfect pose. This is a beautiful asana for meditation. Place one heel at the anus, keep the other heel at the root of the generative organ and the hands on the knees. Close the eyes. Concentrate at the trikuti or at the tip of the nose. Keep the head, neck and trunk in one straight line. Keep the hands as in padmasana, near the knee joints. This asana is beneficial for brahmacharis and sannyasis.

Svastikasana: This is sitting at ease with the body erect. Place the right foot near the left thigh and bring the left foot and push it between the right thigh and calf muscles. Now, you will find the two feet between the thigh and calf muscles. This is svastikasana.

Sukhasana: Any easy comfortable posture for japa and meditation is sukhasana. The important point is that the head and trunk should be straight. Here is a special variety of sukhasana which is very comfortable for old people: Take a cloth 5 cubits (6-7 feet) long and fold it lengthwise. Raise the knees to the chest level. Keep one end of the cloth near the left knee. Take the other end, and going round to the back come to the left knee and make a knot there. Keep the hands between the knees. As the legs, hands and backbone are all supported, one can sit in this asana for a long time.

Benefits of Asanas

> *When (asanajaya is obtained) one is free from the disturbance of the pairs of opposites.* (II-48)

Asana removes many diseases such as piles, dyspepsia and constipation, checks excessive rajas (restlessness) and steadies the body. The body gets genuine rest from the posture. If you are established in asana, if you are firm in your seat, then you can easily take up exercises in pranayama.

When the asana becomes steady you will not feel the body. When you have obtained mastery in the asana, the qualities of the pairs of opposites such as heat and cold will not trouble you. You must sit in the asana with an empty stomach. You can take a small cup of milk, tea or coffee before doing asana.

For meditation, concentration and japa, padmasana or siddhasana are prescribed.

Mental poise is more important than the physical pose. It is more difficult than the practice of asanas. Keep the mind also steady and fixed on the goal of God-realisation. Keep it in a balanced state, let it not sink down or jump with emotion. Be always serene, tranquil and calm. Check its wanderings, make it motionless. Fill it with joy, cheerfulness and zeal. Curb the thoughts, desires and cravings. Annihilate likes and dislikes and building castles in the air. When the mind is more steady and poised the physical pose also will be perfect and steady.

PRANAYAMA

What is *Prana?

Prana is the universal principle of energy or force. It is a vital all-pervading force. It may be either in a static or a dynamic state. It is found in all forms from the highest to the lowest, from the ant to the elephant, from the unicellular amoeba to man, from the elementary forms of plant life to the developed forms of animal life. Prana is the force of every plane of being, from the highest to the lowest.

Whatever moves or has life is but an expression or manifestation of prana. It is prana that shines in your eyes. It is through the power of prana that the ear hears, the eye sees, the skin feels, the tongue tastes, the nose smells and the brain and the intellect perform their functions. The smile in a young lady, the melody in music, the power in the emphatic words of an orator, the charm in the speech of one's beloved are all due to prana. Whatever you behold in this sense-world, whatever moves or works or has life, is but an expression or manifestation of prana.

That which moves the steam engine of a train and a steamer, that which makes the aeroplane glide in space; that which causes the motion of breath in lungs; that which is the very life of this breath itself, is prana. Prana is the sum-total of all energy that is manifest in the universe and all the forces in nature. Heat, light, electricity and magnetism are all the manifestations of prana, and all spring from

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

the fountain or common source — Atman. Fire burns and wind blows through prana. Radio waves travel through prana. Prana is force, magnetism and electricity. It is prana that pumps the blood from the heart into the arteries or blood vessels. It is through prana that digestion, excretion and secretion take place. Prana digests the food, turns it into chyle and blood and sends it into the brain and mind. The mind is then able to think and enquire into the nature of Brahman.

It is through the vibrations of psychic prana that the life of the mind is kept up and thought is produced. Prana is related to the mind and through the mind to the will and through will to the individual soul, and through this to the Supreme Being. If you know how to control the little waves of prana working through the mind the secret of subjugating universal prana will be known to you. Because you see, hear, talk, sense, think, feel, will, know, etc. through the help of prana, the scriptures declare: "Prana is Brahman".

Prana is expended by thinking, willing, acting, moving, talking and writing. A healthy strong man has an abundance of prana (or nerve-force or vitality). It is supplied by food, water, air, solar energy, etc. The supply of prana is taken up by the nervous system. The prana in the air is absorbed by breathing. The excess is stored in the brain and nerve centres. When the seminal energy is sublimated or transformed it supplies an abundance of prana to the system. It is stored up in the brain in the form of spiritual energy.

The yogi stores a great deal of prana through the regular practice of pranayama, just as the storage battery stores electricity. That yogi who has stored up a large supply radiates strength and vitality all around. He is a big power-house and those who come in close contact with him imbibe prana from him and receive strength, vigour, vitality and exhilaration of spirits. Just as water flows from one vessel to another, prana actually flows like a steady current from a developed yogi towards weak persons. This can actually be seen by the yogi who has developed his inner yogic vision.

Breath is not the real prana, it is but an external manifestation of it. It is a physical aspect or symptom or external sign. Breath is gross, while prana is subtle. By controlling the breath you can control the prana — just as you can control the other wheels by controlling or stopping the fly wheel of a diesel engine and just as you can control the hair-spring, cog wheels and the main spring of a watch by controlling the minute hand. Prana connects the body and the mind. It is the outer coat of the mind. Only gross prana moves in the nerves. The subtlest prana moves in the astral *nadis, which are the astral tubes made up of astral matter that carry the subtle prana. It is through these nadis that the vital force or pranic current moves. Since these are made up of subtle matter they cannot be seen by the naked eyes. They are not ordinary nerves, arteries and veins. The body is filled with innumerable nadis that cannot be counted.

Wherever there is an interlacing of several nerves, arteries and veins, that centre is called a plexus. Similarly there are plexuses or centres of vital forces in the subtle nadis. These are called chakras.

*Ida, *pingala and *sushumna are the most important of the innumerable nadis. Ida and pingala are on the two sides of the spinal cord and sushumna is within the spinal canal. Ida operates through the left nostril and pingala through the right nostril. When the breath operates through sushumna the mind becomes steady. This steadiness of mind is called the mindless state, the highest state in raja yoga. If you sit for meditation when sushumna is operating, you will have wonderful meditation. When the nadis are full of impurities the prana cannot pass through the middle nadi. So one should practice pranayama for the purification of the nadis.

A yogi can withdraw prana from any area of the body. That area gets benumbed, becomes impervious to heat and cold and has no sensation. A yogi can send prana also to any area and make it over-sensitive; he can send it to the eyes and see distant objects; he can send it to the nose and can experience divine aromas; he can send it to the tongue and can experience super-sensuous taste.

By control of prana the yogi can also control the omnipresent manifesting power out of which all energies take their origin, whether concerning magnetism, electricity, gravitation, cohesion, nerve currents, vital forces or thought vibrations; in fact, the total forces of the universe, physical and mental.

A comprehensive knowledge of prana and its function is absolutely necessary for pranayama.

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

What is Pranayama?

Pranayama is said to be the union of prana and apana. Pranayama in the language of yoga means the process by which we understand the secret of prana and control it. He who has grasped this prana has grasped the very core of cosmic life and activity. He who has conquered and controlled this very essence has not only controlled his own body and mind, but every other body, mind and power in this universe. Thus, pranayama or the control of prana is that means by which the yogi tries to realise in this little body the whole of cosmic life, and tries to attain perfection by getting all the powers in the universe. His various exercises and training are for this end.

Control of Breath

> *That (control over posture) being acquired, follows pranayama or the control of breath — the cessation of the movements of inspiration and expiration.* (II-49)

When the breath is expired it is termed rechaka; when the breath is drawn in it is termed puraka; when it is suspended it is called kumbhaka. Kumbhaka is retention of breath. It increases the period of life, it augments the inner spiritual force, vigour and vitality. If you retain the breath for one minute, this one minute is added to your span of life.

> *Pranayama is of long duration or subtle according to the external and internal restraint or holding process, regulated by place, time and number.* (II-50)

Each of these motions in pranayama viz., inhalation, exhalation and retention, is regulated by place, time and number.

By place is meant the inside or outside of the body, and the particular part of the body. During expiration the distance to which breath is thrown outside varies in different individuals. The distance varies during inspiration also. The length of air coming out of the nostrils is normally of the measurement of twelve fingers; it is twenty fingers at the time of eating, twenty-four while walking, thirty in sleep, thirty-six at the time of coition and still more while doing exercises. This is to be ascertained through a piece of reed or cotton.

The place of inhalation ranges from the head down to the soles of the feet. This is to be ascertained through a sensation similar to the touch of an ant. The place of retention consists of the external and internal places of both exhalation and inhalation taken together, because the functions of the breath are capable of being held up at both these places. This is to be ascertained through the absence of the two indicatives noted above, in connection with exhalation and inhalation.

Time is the time of duration of inhalation, exhalation and retention. It is generally counted by matra, which corresponds to one second. The time taken in making three rounds of the knee with the palm of the hand, neither very slowly nor quickly, snapping the fingers once, is called a matra. Both the twinkling of an eye and the time occupied by one normal respiration are considered as one matra. The time taken up in pronouncing the mono-syllable OM is also regarded as one matra. This is very convenient. Many pranayama practitioners adopt this time-unit in their practice.

By time is also meant how long the prana should be fixed in a particular centre or part. The pranayama is long or short, according to the period of time it is practised.

Number refers to the number of times the pranayama is performed. The yoga student should slowly take the number of pranayamas to eighty at one sitting. He should have four sittings: in morning, afternoon, evening and midnight or at 9 p.m., and should thus have 320 pranayamas in all.

The specification of the three kinds of breath regulations, by all these three — place, time and number — is only optional. They are not to be understood as to be practised collectively, for in many scriptures we meet with passages where the only specification mentioned with reference to the regulation of breath is that of time.

The period of retention must be gradually increased. Retention gives strength. If you want to increase it for more than three minutes the help of a guru by your side is very necessary. You can suspend the breath for two or three minutes without the help of anybody.

Retention is of two kinds, viz. sahita and kevala. That which is coupled with inhalation and exhalation is termed sahita kumbhaka (which is described in 'Easy Comfortable Pranayama — Sukha

Purvak'). When you get mastery in sahita it is said: "When after giving up of inhalation and exhalation one holds his breath with ease, it is kevala (absolute) kumbhaka. One attains the state of raja yoga." The practitioner attains perfection in yoga.

> *The fourth (pranayama exercise) is going beyond the internal and external positions.* (II-51)

In the previous sutras, three kinds of pranayama exercises are given: viz. internal, external and the period of suspension. In this sutra the highest stage of pranayama is given, going beyond inhalation and exhalation. This is kevala kumbhaka — absolute retention — wherein there is neither inhalation nor exhalation. There is retention only. This is for advanced yogis.

In the third kind of pranayama the spheres of inhalation and exhalation are not taken into consideration. The stoppage of breath occurs with one single effort and is then measured by place, time and number and thus becomes long and subtle. In the fourth variety, however, the spheres of expiration and inspiration are ascertained. The different states are gradually mastered. This fourth variety is not practised all at once by a single effort like the third one. On the other hand, it reaches different states of perfection as it is being done. After one stage is mastered the next stage is taken up and practised. Then it goes in succession. The third is not preceded by measurements and is brought about by a single effort; however the fourth is preceded by the knowledge of the measurements, and is brought about by much effort. This is the only difference. The conditions of place, time and number are applicable to this kind of pranayama also. Particular occult powers develop themselves at each stage of progress.

This fourth pranayama is concerned with the fixing of the prana in the various chakras and taking it very slowly, step by step and stage by stage, to the last chakra in the head, where perfect samadhi takes place. This is internal. Externally it takes into consideration the length of breath in accordance with the prevailing element — earth, water, fire, air or ether.

Pranayama and the Mind

The mind can be made to transcend ordinary experience and exist on a plane higher than reason, known as the superconscious state, and also beyond the limit of concentration. A yogi comes face to face with facts which ordinary consciousness cannot comprehend. This is achieved by proper training and manipulation of the subtle forces of the body as to cause them to give, as it were, an upward push of the mind into higher planes. When the mind is so raised into the superconscious state of perception, it begins to act from there and experiences higher facts and higher knowledge. Such is the ultimate object of pranayama, which is achieved through control.

Then the covering of the light is destroyed. (II-52)

The mind becomes fit for concentration. (II-53)

The fruit of regulation of the breath is retention of breath. The mind is like a wheel which revolves endlessly with tremendous velocity. It generates new thoughts with every revolution. This wheel is set in motion by the vibration of psychic (or subtle) prana. The practice of pranayama lessens the velocity of the mind and slows down the wheel gradually. Perfect control of prana brings the wheel to a standstill. The mind becomes quite steady. Regulation of breath and kumbhaka are of great help in the practice of concentration and meditation.

Mind and prana are interdependent. Prana is the overcoat or the vehicle of the mind. Wherever there is prana there is mind, and vice-versa. If you think deeply on any subject the breathing becomes slow. When one suffers from asphyxia the functioning of the mind comes to a standstill. Mind is the rider, prana is the horse and body is the chariot. Prana vibrates and mind is set in motion. Mind thinks when prana moves. If prana departs from the body, all functions of the body will stop. The body will remain on the ground like a log of wood. Separation of prana from the physical body is called death in common parlance.

Prana vibrates so long as there are subtle desires in the mind. The mind lives so long as it assumes the form of objects. The senses operate so long as they perceive their respective objects. Prana dies when the two currents viz., attraction and repulsion for objects, are annihilated. The senses die when they are withdrawn from their objects by the practice of dispassion and control of the senses. So, the vibrations of prana and desire are the two seeds for the tree of mind. Should either of them perish, both die soon. If you control the prana through regular practice of pranayama, the mind-bird will be caught easily.

He who has controlled his mind has also controlled his breath. If one is suspended the other is also suspended. If the mind and the prana are both controlled one gets liberation from the round of births and deaths and attains immortality.

Physical Benefits of Pranayama

The practice of pranayama has great influence over the body, mind, intellect and the senses. It supplies abundant fresh energy to the body, steadies the mind and removes the impurities of the mind also. It strengthens the intellect, augments the intellectual capacity and increases the power of memory. It calms the turbulent senses and checks their outgoing tendencies.

Pranayama also gives good exercise for the various internal organs and the whole body. It removes all sorts of diseases, improves health, energises digestion, invigorates the nerves, removes rajas (restlessness) and awakens the *kundalini shakti. A pranayama practitioner can stop his breath. Even if people break stones on his chest he does not feel anything, because he has controlled his prana.

A pranayama practitioner will have a light body free from disease, a very fair complexion, a sweet melodious voice, pleasant smell from his body and scanty excrement.

Hints for Practice

The room in which you practise pranayama must not be damp and ill-ventilated. It must be dry and airy.

You can do the practice by the side of a river or lake, in the corner of a garden, in open air, when there is no chill or draught of cold air, or on the top or foot of a hill. In summer you can have the practice in the cool hours of the morning only. Sit by the side of a river or lake or sea, if you can manage. If the day is hot or winds blow, stop doing pranayama. You can do sitali to cool the body in summer. You can start the practice in the rainy season or winter.

Do not combine too many exercises and pranayama. Yoga practices should be done gradually, step by step and little by little.

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Some hatha yoga books interdict cold bath in the early morning. Probably the reason may be that one may catch cold or develop some complaint of the lungs if he takes cold bath at 4 a.m., particularly in cold places like Kashmir, Mussoorie, Darjeeling, etc. There is no such restriction in hot places. I am always in favour of morning cold baths before one starts the yoga practices, as it is refreshing and stimulating. It drives off drowsiness, it helps regular circulation of blood and a healthy flow of blood towards the brain.

To drive off drowsiness sit in *vajrasana, (the same pose in which the Muslims sit for offering prayers) and bend the body down. Let the forehead touch the ground or bed. Then come back to the original position. Repeat this 12 times. Sleep will vanish. Do some mild breath retention also. Let the night-food be light. Take one piece of bread, milk or fruits. Do not take late hour dinner or supper. Finish your evening meal before 7 p.m. You can also sit for meditation and japa on vajrasana. Those who sit on this asana will never feel drowsy.

Students of pranayama should avoid fasting altogether. They should be careful in the selection of their food. A rigid pranayama practitioner should avoid solid food. He should live on a regimen of cream, cheese, milk, butter, fruits, etc. [There is no restriction in diet for the highest class of sannyasin who tries to realise 'Aham Brahma Asmi' ('I am Brahman'). There is no harm in his fasting. If he lives on alms begged from three or five houses he can take any kind of food, save meat, fish, etc.]

Pranayama students are not allowed to sit by the side of a fire because there is likelihood of inhaling carbon dioxide. The practice of pranayama should be performed daily with the mind firmly fixed on Truth. Then the prana becomes steady and does not fluctuate. Pranayama requires deep concentration and attention.

There should be no strain in any stage of pranayama. You must experience joy and pleasure in practising. You should not feel any undue strain.

Take sole refuge in pranayama. Be interested in the practice of retention of breath alone, if your mind is solely turned towards pranayama. Take great caution at every step.

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Pranayama Exercises

Pranayama is an exact science. It is the control of the prana and the vital forces of the body through the regulation of the breath. A correct habit of breathing must be established by the regular practice of pranayama. In ordinary worldly persons the breathing is irregular, there is neither rhythm nor harmony. A yogi practises regulation of the breath and establishes harmony. When the breath is regulated, when there is harmony, the breath will be moving evenly within the nostrils.

Preliminary Exercises: 1. Sit on any comfortable asana. Keep the head, neck and trunk in a straight line. Draw the air slowly through both the nostrils as long as it is comfortable. Do not retain the breath. Then slowly exhale.

Practise this for three months. Do it six times to begin with and then gradually increase the number to 30. Practise this in the morning on an empty stomach.

2. Then close the right nostril with the right thumb. Inhale through the left nostril and exhale through the right nostril; then again inhale through the right and exhale through the left nostril. This establishes equipoise of mind and breath.

Sukha Purvak: This is easy comfortable pranayama. Sit in the lotus posture or other meditative pose in your meditation room before the picture of your chosen deity. Close the right nostril with the right thumb. Draw in the air very, very slowly through the left nostril. Then close the left nostril also with the little and ring fingers of the right hand. Retain the air as long as you comfortably can. Then exhale very, very slowly through the right nostril after removing the thumb. Now half the process is over. Then draw the air through the right nostril. Retain the air as before and exhale it very, very slowly through the left nostril. All these six processes constitute one pranayama. Do twenty in the morning and twenty in the evening.

Have the mental attitude that all the divine qualities like mercy, love, forgiveness, peace and joy are entering into your system along with the inspired air, and that all undivine qualities like lust, anger, greed and pride are being thrown out along with the expired air.

You must adjust the inhalation, retention and exhalation so nicely that you do not experience the feeling of suffocation or discomfort at any stage of pranayama. You should never feel the necessity of catching hold of a few normal breaths between any two successive rounds. The duration of inhalation, retention and exhalation must be properly adjusted. Exercise due care and attention and matters will turn out to be successful and easy in the end. Always inhale and exhale very, very slowly. Do not make the least sound. You must not unnecessarily prolong the period of exhalation, otherwise the following inhalation will be done in a hurried manner, and the rhythm will be disturbed. When this becomes effortless, maintain a ratio of inhalation, retention, exhalation of 1:4:2.

If you want rapid progress in the practice you must have four sittings — morning 4 a.m., afternoon 4 p.m., night 8 p.m., and at midnight 12 p.m. — and do 4 x 80 = 320 retentions. This pranayama exercise removes all diseases, purifies the nadis, steadies the mind in concentration, improves digestion, increases the digestive power, helps in maintaining brahmacharya and enables one to attain kevala kumbhaka (absolute retention) in due course of practice.

There is no danger in practising pranayama, asana, etc., if you are careful, if you use your commonsense. People are unnecessarily alarmed. There is danger in everything if you are careless. If you are careless in going down the staircase you will fall down and break your legs. If you are careless when you walk in the busy parts of a city you will be crushed by the motor cars. If you are careless when you purchase a ticket at the railway station you will lose your money-purse. If you are careless in dispensing mixtures you will kill the patients by giving a poison or a wrong medicine or administering a medicine in overdose. Even so, when you practise pranayama you will have to be careful about your diet. You should avoid over-loading; you should take light, easily digestible and nutritious food. You should be moderate in copulation. You should not go beyond your capacity in retaining the breath. You should first practise inhalation and exhalation only (without retention of breath) for one or two months. You should gradually increase the ratio of inhalation, retention and exhalation from 1:4:2 to 16:64:32. You should inhale very, very slowly. If these rules are observed there is no danger at all in the practice of pranayama.

Pranayama and Hatha Yoga

The chief aim of pranayama is to unite the prana with the apana and take the united prana-apana slowly upwards toward the head. The effect or fruit of pranayama is the awakening of the sleeping *kundalini.

A hatha yogi unites prana and apana through retention of breath (kumbhaka) and bandhas. He awakens the kundalini through the heat generated in retention of breath. He opens the sushumna and takes the united prana-apana along the sushumna nadi. He takes sole refuge in pranayama. He always does kumbhaka, whereas a raja yogi does a little pranayama and a little kumbhaka to steady the mind and stop the vrittis. The raja yogi's chief aim is meditation through concentration of mind. By closing one nostril the yogi helps the free full flow of breath in the other nostril. Stoppage of breath comes not through closing the nostrils but through stopping the lungs from operating.

Pranayama is a great help — not only to hatha yogis, but also to raja yogis and vedantins — as it steadies the mind. A vedantic student who is in the habit of meditating on OM with feeling will actually think of Atman always even while practising pranayama, and concentrate on the blissful Self. A raja yogi will concentrate on that special Purusha or Ishvara. A hatha yogi will concentrate on kundalini shakti in muladhara chakra and try to feel that the muladhara is pierced and kundalini is moving towards *svadhisthana.

Just as a goldsmith removes the impurities of gold by heating it in the hot furnace by strongly blowing the blow-pipe, so also the yoga student removes the impurities of the body and the senses by blowing his lungs, i.e. by practising pranayama.

Twelve pranayamas constitute one pratyahara. Twelve pratyaharas constitute one dharana. Twelve dharanas make up dhyana (meditation). Twelve dhyanas will constitute samadhi. For instance, retention of breath for twelve seconds will constitute one pranayama. Twelve such pranayamas, i.e. retention of breath for two minutes and twenty-four seconds will make up one pratyahara; twelve such pratyaharas (i.e. retention of breath for twenty-eight minutes and forty-eight seconds) will constitute one dharana; twelve

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

such dharanas, i.e. retention of breath or fixing the mind on an object or point for five hours, forty-five minutes and thirty-six seconds will constitute one dhyana; twelve such dhyanas, i.e. retention of breath for two days, twenty-one hours, seven minutes and twelve seconds will constitute one samadhi. Yogi Goraksha holds that retention of breath for two hours constitutes one dharana, for twenty-four hours one dhyana, for twelve days one samadhi.

Pranayama and Pratyahara

It is very difficult to say where pranayama ends and pratyahara (sense control) begins. Those who practise pranayama four times daily at the rate of 80 retentions per sitting can get success in pratyahara generally within three months. If you are able to suspend the breath for three minutes or till you count 180 times OM mentally, you will be able to do pratyahara to some extent. Those who have practised pranayama at the ratio of 20:80:40 for one hour daily, for six months, will be able to do pratyahara to a small degree.

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

PRATYAHARA

Pratyahara is that by which the senses do not associate with their own objects, and imitate, as it were, the nature of the mind-stuff (chitta) (II-54)

Thence comes the supreme mastery over the senses. (II-55)

Pratyahara (sense-control) is derived from the verbal root, hri, meaning to draw. Hence, pratyahara means drawing back or withdrawing the senses and the mind from the sensual and external objects and making them almost fuse with the mind, the fountain-head of all faculties. The senses are held in check by this practice. From pratyahara starts the real inner spiritual life. The external world is shut out.

The yoga student should practise pratyahara after getting some success in the practice of yama, niyama, asana and pranayama, which prepare the aspirant for its practice. The mind is rendered calm by the practice of celibacy and non-covetousness. Asana and pranayama squeeze out restlessness; pranayama checks the outgoing tendencies. Now the mind can be easily detached and the senses can be absorbed in the prana or mind. Pratyahara or sense-control gives inner spiritual strength and great peace of mind. It develops will-power and removes all sorts of distractions.

Pratyahara automatically follows the practice of pranayama. When the life-force is controlled by regulation or restraint of the breath, the senses become thinned out. They are starved to death.

They get emaciated. They cannot hiss now when they come in contact with their objects.

There is an externalizing or objectifying power in the mind. It is the outgoing tendency of the mind, due to restlessness. When the vision is turned outward the rush of fleeting events engages the mind and the outgoing energies of the mind begin to play. The mind is drawn towards objects. Further, on account of force of habit, the ears and eyes at once run towards sounds. Objects and desires are an externalizing force. A restless, aggresive man full of desires can never dream of an inner spiritual life. He is absolutely unfit for the practice of introspection.

When the outgoing tendencies of the mind are arrested, when the mind is retained within the heart and when all its attention is turned on itself alone, that condition is known as antarmukha vritti, where the mind turns inward owing to increase in purity (sattva). The spiritual aspirant can do a lot of spiritual practice when he has this inward movement of the mind. Dispassion and introspection help a lot in the attainment of this mental state.

Through constant spiritual practice the mind must be checked from externalising. It must be made to move towards God, its original home.

Mind is the commander-in-chief. The senses are the soldiers. The senses cannot do anything without the co-operation of the mind. The senses cannot perform anything independently. They can operate only in company with the mind. If you can disconnect the mind from the senses there will automatically be abstraction of the senses.

An unsteady posture, too much talking, too much mixing, too much work, too much food, too much walking, too much worldly activity and poking the nose in other's affairs produce much distraction in the mind and stand in the way of the practice of sense-control. They fill the mind with worldly impressions and generate lower emotions. When you mix with people during work, again and again fix the mind on your goal. Rest in your background of thought, either of a form or an abstract idea. This will serve as a strong fortress to protect you from the onslaught of worldly thoughts.

Raja yoga methods are all exact and scientific. They are all rigid graduated practices. The yoga student places his foot cautiously in the ladder of raja yoga. The steps or stages are well tried by yoga experts. The yoga 'tablets' were prepared in the yoga laboratory after careful scrutiny, investigation and research. They are not haphazard products of charlatans. Move steadily and cautiously and attain eternal bliss.

First withdraw the senses from the objects, then withdraw the mind from the senses through dispassion, discrimination and practice; then withdraw the mind from the prana by practising retention of breath. Now plunge yourself in God or the Absolute by withdrawing all thoughts, just as the sun plunges into the horizon in the evening by withdrawing its rays. Practise these again and again. Practise eternal vigilance, discrimination, enquiry, determination and resolution. Now nirvikalpa samadhi will supervene, you will realise your essential nature. You will be freed from the cycle of births and deaths.

Purification, meditation, illumination and absorption are the four processes in any form of yoga. Purify your mind first, then practise regular meditation. You will attain illumination and there will be absorption. The mind will be absorbed in Brahman, the individual soul will merge in the Supreme Soul and you will attain moksha or liberation.

That yoga student who jumps at once to the practice of meditation without practising abstraction, is a deluded soul. He will have no success in contemplation.

Pratyahara is a trying discipline indeed. It is disgusting in the beginning, but later on it becomes very interesting. You will feel inner strength. It demands considerable patience and perseverance. It will give you tremendous power. You will develop immense will-power. During the course of practice the senses will run again and again like wild bulls towards objects. You will have to withdraw them again and again and fix the mind on the goal just as the cart-driver drags the impetuous bulls and fixes them to the yoke. You must drag the senses gently. Some aspirants draw them vehemently. That is the reason why they experience a little headache occasionally.

You should practise withdrawal of the senses one by one. Deal with the most turbulent sense first. Practise pratyahara of that particular sense to start with. Then you can take up another sense. If you try to manipulate them all at a time, you will gain no success. The task will be an up-hill work. You will feel quite exhausted.

Partial success in the practice of control will not help the yoga student much. If dispassion wanes and if there is slackness in the practice, the senses may again become turbulent. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: "*O son of Kunti, the excited senses of even a wise man, though he be striving, impetuously carry away his mind. Such of the roving senses as the mind yields to, carry away the understanding, just as the gale carries away a ship upon the waters.*" (*Bhagavad Gita* II-60 and 67)

Attain victory over posture, keep a steady pose; be regular in the practice of pranayama; cultivate dispassion, enquiry and discrimination and always look into the defects of a sensual life such as reaction after enjoyment, pain, cravings, etc. Develop serenity, contentment, patience; be persevering, tenacious and ever vigilant. Pray to the Lord, sing, do japa and obtain the divine grace. Observe mauna, moderation in diet, practise celibacy, stick to resolves, live in seclusion. Be bold, be pure, be wise. Have company of the good and the wise, and give up evil company. You will have success in control of the senses.

There are several methods for bringing about pratyahara. Concentration is the direct method to get success. Sit in a quiet room and withdraw the senses — this is the raja yoga method of pratyahara. Have a spiritual background of thought, either of a form or an abstract idea. The mind will rest in this background when it is released from work, just as a rubber released of its tension returns to its original form. Another method is to divide the mind and fix a portion on God. Let the other portion do work — like the songster who sings with the tambura. Having the eyes open but not focussed on anything is another method. If you feel that this world is a manifestation of the Lord, sensual attraction will die by itself. Have a strong conviction and understanding that real lasting happiness can be had only in the Atman within. This is a help for curbing the outgoing tendencies of the mind. Pratyahara cannot produce absent-mindedness. On the other hand, it increases efficiency and speed.

There is chaos and disturbance on the surface only. Dive deep into the centre by withdrawing yourself from the sensual objects and look within; you will enjoy perfect inward stillness and supreme peace. Nothing can upset your poise or equanimity now. Rishis of yore lived always in this centre and were happy and joyful despite various external disturbing conditions. Nothing could shake their mental balance.

The wife of sage Tiruvalluvar had remarkable success in the practice of pratyahara. She carried a pot of water on her head amidst a big crowd without allowing a drop of water to fall down. Suka Deva also had wonderful success. He was tested by King Janaka in his palace. King Janaka arranged for music and dancing parties all around his palace to distract the attention of Suka Deva. There were various kinds of shows and entertainments. Suka Deva was asked to carry in his hand a cup of milk that was filled to the very brim and make three rounds of the palace without allowing even a drop to overflow and fall on the ground. Suka Deva had complete success in his attempt as he was fully established in pratyahara. Nothing could distract his mind.

He who is proficient in pratyahara can enter into deep sleep the moment he lies down on his bed. Napoleon could do this as he was very proficient. That yogi who is well established in pratyahara can meditate calmly even on the battle-field where countless machine guns roar in a continuous stream.

Success in pratyahara depends upon the strength of past yoga impressions which the yoga student possesses. He who has practised yama, niyama, asana, pranayama and pratyahara in his previous births to some extent, will have success in pratyahara within a short time in this birth. A beginner who attempts to practise yoga for the first time in this birth, who has no previous impressions of past births to his credit, may take a long time to achieve some definite positive realisation in pratyahara. One can decide whether he is a new practitioner in yoga or an old yoga student from his own experiences and degree of success in his practice in this birth.

DHARANA

Dharana or concentration is the fixing of the mind on one place (object or idea). (III-1)

At other times (when there is no concentration), the seer has identification with the modifications of the mind. (I-4)

Mind is compared to quicksilver, because its rays are scattered over various objects. It is compared to a monkey, because it jumps from one object to another object. It is compared to a rutting furious elephant because of its passionate impetuosity. It is known by the name 'Great Bird' because it jumps from one object to another just as a bird jumps from one twig to another, from one tree to another.

Some western psychologists hold: "The mind that wanders aimlessly can be made to move in a small limited circle only, by the practice of concentration. It cannot be fixed on one point only. If it is fixed on one point only then inhibition of the mind will take place. There is death for the mind. Nothing can be achieved when there is inhibition of the mind. So there is no use of inhibiting the mind." This is not right. Complete control of the mind can be attained when all the thought-waves are thoroughly extirpated. The yogi works wonders by his one-pointedness of mind. He knows the hidden treasures of the soul with the help of the mighty all-penetrating searchlight generated by one-pointedness of mind. After one-pointedness is attained you have to achieve full restraint. In this stage all modifications subside completely. The mind becomes quite blank. Then the yogi destroys the blank mind also, by identifying himself with the Supreme Purusha or Soul or Being from whom the mind borrows its light. Then he obtains omniscience and final emancipation. These are matters that are unknown to our western psychologists. Hence, they grope in darkness. They have no idea of the Purusha who witnesses the activities of the mind.

Man is a complex social animal. He is a biological organism and so he is definitely characterised by the possession of certain physiological functions such as circulation of blood, digestion, respiration, excretion, etc. He is also definitely characterised by the possession of certain psychological functions, such as thinking, perception, memory, imagination, etc. He sees, thinks, tastes, smells and feels. Philosophically speaking, he is the image of God — nay he is God himself. He lost his divine glory by tasting the fruit of the forbidden tree. He can regain his lost divinity by mental discipline and the practice of concentration.

In all of man's struggles and attempts at achieving any desired end there is in reality no necessity at all for him to go in quest of external forces to aid him. Man contains within himself vast resources of inherent power lying untapped or else only partially made use of.

It is because he has allowed his faculties to get scattered on a hundred different things that he fails to achieve anything great, despite his inherent possibilities. If he intelligently regulates and applies them, quick and concrete results will accrue.

To learn to rationally and effectively use the existing forces, man need not wait for any striking new methods to be invented to guide him. Since the dawn of creation nature herself abounds in instructive examples and lessons to aid man in every walk of life. Observation will tell us that every force in nature, when allowed to flow loosely over a wide area, moves slowly and with comparatively less power than it would do if gathered together in one mass and directed through a single restricted outlet.

This gathering together and bringing to bear of a force at a given point on any object, idea or action, forms the process of concentration. The concentrated application of a force makes for maximum results in minimum time and with minimum effort.

Examples of the power generated by a concentration of force are cited: (1) The sluggish and leisurely flow of a river, dammed and accumulated, rushes out with an amazing force through the sluice. (2) The phenomenon of ton-loads of cargo in heavy wagons being hauled or propelled by the power of steam, concentrated in the boiler of the engine. Also, the clattering and displacement of the covering lid of a cauldron when the latter commences to boil very much is a most common domestic sight. (3) The normally warm sunrays become suddenly so hot as to burn up objects when centralised and brought into focus through a lens. (4) The simplest and commonest action, where one unconsciously uses this principle, is noticed when a man wishing to hail another a good distance away automatically cups his palms and shouts through them.

The mind is like an unchained monkey. It has the power of attending to only one object at a time, although it is able to pass from one object to another with tremendous speed. The mind is ever restless. This is due to the force of rajas and passion. Concentration is necessary for success in material affairs. A man with an appreciable degree of concentration has more earning capacity and turns out more work in less time. Need I say that the yoga student will be amply rewarded for his effort in concentration?

During concentration the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of meditation. There will be no tossing of the mind. One idea occupies the mind. The whole energy of the mind is concentrated on that one idea. The senses become still. They do not function. When there is deep concentration, there is no consciousness of the body and surroundings. He who can practise real concentration for half or one hour will have tremendous psychic powers. He will also be very powerful. There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear on one point. Man is born to concentrate the mind on God after collecting the mental rays that are dissipated on various objects. That is his important duty. He forgets his duty on account of attachment for family, children, money, power, position, respect, name and fame.

When you study a book with profound interest you do not hear if a man shouts and calls you by your name. You do not see a person when he stands in front of you. You do not smell the sweet fragrance of flowers that are placed on the table by your side. This is concentration or one-pointedness of mind. The mind is fixed firmly on one thing. You must have such a deep concentration when you think of God or the Atman. It is easy to concentrate the mind on a worldly object, because the mind takes interest in it naturally through force of habit. The grooves are already cut in the brain. You will have to train the mind gradually by daily practice of concentration, by fixing it again and again on the image of God, or the Self within. The mind will not move now to external objects, as it experiences immense joy from the practice of concentration.

Concentration is fixing the mind on an external object or an internal point. There can be no concentration without something upon which the mind may rest. A definite purpose, interest and attention will bring success in concentration.

The senses draw you out and perturb your peace of mind. If your mind is restless, you cannot make any progress. When the rays of the mind are collected by practice, the mind becomes concentrated and you get bliss from within. Silence the bubbling thoughts and calm the emotions.

Concentration as Part of Raja Yoga

Dharana is the sixth stage or limb of ashtanga yoga, or raja yoga of Patanjali Maharishi.

Real raja yoga starts from concentration. Concentration in a spiritual sense means the one-pointedness of the mind. It is the fixing of one's mind on the deity of one's choice. Once a Sanskrit scholar approached Kabir and asked him: "O Kabir, what are you doing now?" Kabir replied: "O pandit, I am detaching the mind from worldly objects and attaching it to the lotus feet of the Lord."

A well trained-mind can be fixed at will upon any object, either inside or outside, to the exclusion of all else. For example, once there was a workman who used to manufacture arrows. Once he was very busy at his work. He was so much absorbed in his work that he did not notice even a big party of the Rajah with his retinue passing in front of his shop. Such must be the nature of your concentration when you fix your mind on God. You must have the one idea of God and God alone. No doubt it takes some time to have complete one-pointedness of mind. You will have to struggle very hard to have single-minded concentration. Sri Dattatreya took the above arrow-maker as one of his gurus.

Arjuna had wonderful concentration. He learnt the science of archery from Dronacharya. A dead bird was tied to a post in such a way that its reflection was cast in a basin of water right beneath on the ground. Arjuna saw the reflection of the bird in the basin of water and aimed successfully in hitting the right eye of the actual bird tied to the post above.

This is concentration. To attain concentration you should drive off all useless thoughts of the world. You must be entirely free from all base desires of a worldly nature. You should substitute divine thoughts in their stead. Right conduct, postures, pranayama and abstraction from sensual objects will pave the way to achieving rapid success in concentration. Concentration is required not only in the spiritual path, but also in every walk of life. A man without concentration is a failure in life.

The practice of concentration and the practice of pranayama are interdependent. If you practise pranayama you will get concentration. He who has a steady posture and has purified his nerves and the vital sheath by the constant practice of pranayama will be able to concentrate easily. Natural pranayama follows the practice of concentration.

There are different practices according to different temperaments. For some the practice of pranayama will be easy to start with, for others the practice of concentration will be easy to begin with. Concentration will be intense if you remove all distractions. A true celibate who has preserved his energy will have wonderful concentration.

Meditation follows concentration. Samadhi follows meditation. The state of being liberated while living follows the attainment of nirvikalpa samadhi, which is free from all thoughts of duality. It leads to emancipation from the wheel of birth and death. Therefore, concentration is the first and foremost thing an aspirant should acquire on the spiritual path.

The mind is compared in the Hindu scriptures to a lake or ocean. The thoughts arising from the mind are compared to the waves of the ocean. You can see your reflection clearly on the water of the ocean only when all the waves on the surface subside completely and become still. So also, you can realise the Self, the Light of lights, only when all the thought-waves in the mind-lake are stilled.

Benefits of Concentration

The sum total of the pleasures of the whole world is nothing when compared to the bliss derived through concentration and meditation. Do not give up the practice of concentration at any cost. Plod on. Have patience, perseverance, cheerfulness, tenacity and application. You will eventually succeed. Do not despair.

For a neophyte the practice of concentration is disgusting and tiring in the beginning. He has to cut new grooves in the mind and brain. After some months he will get great interest in concentration. He will enjoy a new kind of happiness, the bliss of concentration. He will become restless if he fails to enjoy this new kind of happiness even for one day. Concentration is the only way to get rid of worldly miseries and tribulations. Your only duty is to practise concentration. You have taken this physical body to practise concentration and through concentration to realise the Self. Charity and the greatest sacrificial ceremonies are nothing when compared with concentration. They are playthings only.

Through dispassion, pratyahara and the practice of concentration the dissipated rays of the wandering mind are slowly collected. Through steady practice it is rendered one-pointed. How happy and strong is that yogi who has a one-pointed mind! He can turn out voluminous work in the twinkling of an eye.

When the rays of the mind are scattered over diverse objects, you get pain. When the rays are gathered and collected by practice, the mind becomes concentrated and you get bliss from within.

When you see your dear friend after six years, the happiness that you get is not from the person but from within yourself. The mind becomes concentrated for the time being and you get happiness from within your own self.

Concentration is the only way to get rid of worldly miseries and tribulations. The practitioner will have very good health and a cheerful mental vision. He can get a penetrative insight. He can do any work with greater efficiency. Concentration purifies and calms the surging emotions, strengthens the current of thought and clarifies the ideas. Purify the mind first through yama and niyama. Concentration without purity is of no use.

When there is faith the mind can easily be concentrated on the subject to be understood and then the understanding quickly follows.

If you read with concentration the *Bhagavad Gita*, the

Ramayana or the eleventh skandha of *Bhagavatam* several times, you will get new ideas each time. Through concentration you will get penetrative insight. Subtle esoteric meanings will flash out in the field of mental consciousness. You will understand the inner depths of philosophical significance.

By manipulating the mind you will be able to bring it under your control, make it work as you like and compel it to concentrate its powers as you desire. If you practise concentration for three hours daily you will have tremendous psychic power. You will have a strong will power.

If there is an inflammatory swelling on your back with throbbing pain you do not experience any pain at night when you are asleep. Only when the mind is connected with the diseased part through nerves and thinking do you begin to experience pain. If you can consciously withdraw the mind from the diseased part by concentrating it on God or any other attractive object you will not experience any pain even when you are wide awake. If you have a powerful will and strong power of endurance, then also you will not experience any pain. By constant thinking of any trouble or disease you only augment your pain and suffering. Whenever there is pain in the body, practise concentration on your tutelary deity or study some philosophical books. The pain will vanish.

When there is deep concentration you will experience great joy and spiritual intoxication. You will forget the body and the surroundings. All the prana will be taken up to your head.

Concentrate. Meditate. Develop the powers of deep thinking and concentrated thinking. Many obscure points will be rendered quite clear. You will get answers and solutions from within.

As mind evolves you come into conscious relation with the mental currents of the minds of others, near and distant, living and dead.

You press the button and the light flashes out from the torch in the twinkling of an eye. Even so, the yogi concentrates and presses the button at the chakra — the centre between the two eyebrows — and the divine light flashes out immediately.

Concentration in Daily Life

A well-trained mind can be fixed at will upon any object, either inside or outside, to the exclusion of all other thoughts. Everybody possesses some ability to concentrate in some way. A man with an appreciable degree of concentration has more earning capacity and turns out more work in a shorter time. But, for spiritual progress concentration should be developed to a very high degree. In concentration there should be no strain on the brain. You should not fight or wrestle with the mind.

A scientist concentrates his mind and invents many things. Through concentration he opens the layers of the gross mind and penetrates deeply into higher regions of the mind and gets deeper knowledge. He concentrates all the energies of his mind into one focus and throws them out upon the materials he is analysing and so finds out their secrets.

This law is equally applicable to man in all branches of his life's activities. With the utmost concentrated and careful attention the surgeon executes minute operations. The deepest absorption marks the state of the technician, the engineer, architect or the expert painter engaged in drawing the minute details of a plan, chart or sketch, where accuracy is of paramount importance. Similar concentration is displayed by the skilled Swiss workmen who fashion the delicate parts of watches and other scientific instruments. Thus in every art and science. This is specially so in the spiritual line where the aspirant has to deal with forces internal.

Napoleon also had remarkable power of concentration. It is said that he had full control over his thoughts. He could draw one thought from a pigeon hole of his brain, dwell on that single thought as long as he liked and then shove it back into that pigeon hole. He had a peculiar brain with peculiar pigeon-holes!

Fix your mind on the work at hand. Give your complete heart and soul to it, if it be even a small work like peeling off the skin of a plantain fruit or squeezing a lemon. Never do anything haphazardly. Never take your meals in haste. Be calm and patient in all your actions. Never arrive at hasty conclusions. Never do a thing in haste. No work can be done successfully without calmness and concentration. Those who have attained success and become great have all possessed this indispensable virtue.

You must know very well the science of relaxation of the mind. You must be able to eliminate all other thoughts from the mind. You must think of rest only. You should consider yourself as if you were dead. Mentally repeat the names of the Lord and think of the ananda (bliss) aspect of His attributes. You will not have dreams. You will rest in blissful sleep. You will be refreshed very easily. Even if you sleep for two hours you will feel quite refreshed.

If you can always do your work with perfect attention and concentration you will be successful in every attempt. You will never meet with failure. When you sit for prayers and meditation, never think of your office work. When you work in the office never think of the child who is sick or any other household work. When you take bath do not think of games. When you sit for meals do not think of the work that is pending in the office. You must train yourself to attend to the work on hand with perfect one-pointedness. You can easily develop your will-power and memory. Concentration is the master key to open the gates of victory. If an ordinary man takes one hour to do a work, a man of good concentration will accomplish it in half an hour with better efficiency than the former. You will become a mighty man.

He who has learnt to manipulate the mind will get the whole of nature under control.

Ethical Basis

Find out by serious introspection the various impediments that act as stumbling blocks in your concentration, and remove them with effort, one by one. Do not allow new thoughts and desires to crop up. Nip them in the bud through discrimination, enquiry, concentration and meditation.

Some foolish impatient students take to concentration at once without undergoing, in any manner, any preliminary training in ethics. This is a serious blunder. Ethical perfection is a matter of paramount importance.

Concentration without purity of mind is of no avail. There are some occultists who have concentration, but they do not have good character. That is the reason why they do not make any progress in the spiritual line.

Purify the mind first through the practice of right conduct and then take to the practice of concentration. Even if you do a little practise the effect is there. Nothing is lost. That is the immutable law of nature. You will not be able to detect the little improvement that has come out of a little practise, as you have no subtle and pure intellect. You must develop the virtues of dispassion, patience and perseverance to a maximum degree. You must have an unshakable conviction in the existence of God and in the efficacy of spiritual practices. You must have a strong determination: 'I will realise God right now in this very birth, nay in this very second. I will realise or die.'

Worldly pleasures intensify the desire for enjoying greater pleasures. Hence the mind of worldlings is very restless. There is no satisfaction and mental peace. Mind can never be satisfied, whatever amount of pleasure you may store up for it. The more it enjoys the pleasures the more it wants them. So people are exceedingly troubled and bothered by their own minds. They are tired of their minds. Hence, in order to remove these botherations and troubles the rishis thought it best to deprive the mind of all sensual pleasures.

The more the mind is fixed on God, the more strength you will acquire. More concentration means more energy. Concentration opens the inner chambers of love or the realm of eternity. Concentration is a source of spiritual strength. Concentration is the sole key for opening the chamber of knowledge. When the mind has been concentrated or made extinct it cannot pinch one to seek for further pleasure, all botherations and troubles are removed forever and the person attains real peace.

A Hard Task

There are various kinds of impurities in the mind. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and to get a one-pointed mind. Concentration is a question of practice for several lives, it is the most difficult thing in the world. One should not get dejected after practising for some months or one or two years. You should have patience, adamantine will and untiring persistence. You must be very regular in your practices, otherwise laziness and adverse forces will take you away from your goal.

An impatient man cannot practise concentration. He gets up from his seat within a few seconds, and he gives up the practice within a week or month. Concentration demands asinine patience for it is very disgusting and tiring in the beginning because you have to take the mental current upwards, like taking the Ganges water up to Badrinarayan. Later on it bestows infinite peace and bliss.

A bird tried to empty the ocean with a blade of grass. A doctor who discovered M & B 693 tablets made experiments of combinations 693 times. You must have patience like the bird and the doctor; then alone will you succeed in yoga.

Some medical students leave the medical college soon after joining it, as they find it disgusting to wash the pus in ulcers and dissect the dead bodies. They make a serious blunder. In the beginning it is loathsome. After studying pathology, medicine, operative surgery, morbid anatomy and bacteriology, the course will be very interesting in the final year. Many spiritual aspirants leave off the practice of concentration of mind after some time, as they find it difficult to practise. They make a grave mistake, like the medical students. In the beginning of the practice, when you struggle to get over body-consciousness, it will be disgusting and troublesome. It will be a physical wrestling. The emotions and thoughts (sankalpas) will be abundant. In the third year of practice the mind will be cool, pure and strong. You will derive immense joy.

Collect the rays of the mind. Just as you will have to take back with care your cloth that is fallen on a thorny plant by slowly removing the thorns one by one, so also you will have to collect back with care and exertion the dissipated rays of the mind that have been thrown over the sensual objects for very many years.

Building castles in the air is not concentration. It is wild jumping of the mind in the air. Do not mistake it for concentration or meditation. Check the habit of the mind through introspection and self-analysis.

If you are careless, if you are irregular in concentration, if your dispassion wanes, if you give up the practice for some days on account of laziness, the adverse forces will take you away from the true path of yoga. You will be stranded. It will be difficult for you to rise up again to the original height. Therefore be regular in concentration.

If the aspirant pursues what is not fitting, his progress will be painful and sluggish. He who pursues the right path gets easy progress and quick intuition. He who has no past conditioning or spiritual tendencies of previous births makes painful progress. One who has spiritual tendencies makes easy progress. In one whose nature is actually corrupt and whose controlling faculties are weak, progress is painful and intuition is sluggish, but to one of keen controlling faculties, progress is rapid and intuition is quick. In one overcome by ignorance, intuition is sluggish; in one not so overcome, intuition is rapid.

Those who practise concentration off and on will have a steady mind only occasionally. Sometimes the mind will begin to wander and will be quite unfit for application. You must have a mind that will obey you at all times sincerely, and carry out all your commands in the best possible manner at any time. Steady and systematic practice of raja yoga will make the mind very obedient and faithful. When you concentrate on any object do not wrestle with the mind. Avoid tension anywhere in the body or mind. Think gently of the object in a continuous manner. Do not allow the mind to wander away.

Useful Hints for Concentration

The vital point in concentration is to bring the mind to the same point or object again and again, by limiting its movements to a small circle in the beginning. That is the main aim. (A time will come when the mind will stick to one point alone. This is the fruit of your constant and protracted practice. The joy will be indescribable.)

For instance if you think of a rose, have all sorts of thoughts connected with the rose only. You can think of different kinds of roses that are grown in different parts of the world. You can think of various preparations that are made out of roses and their uses, etc. When you concentrate on a chair, it really means getting full and detailed knowledge of the chair — its different parts; the particular wood out of which it is manufactured (such as devadaru, rosewood. etc.); its workmanship, durability and cost price; the degree of comfort it gives for the back, arms etc.; whether the parts can be detached and fixed again; whether it is manufactured on modern lines and made bug-proof; what sort of varnish or polish is used to make it durable, etc. Bring all thoughts connected with the chair and dwell on these ideas. Do not allow any other thought connected with another object to enter the mind. There should be one line of thought, one continuity of thought like the steady flow of oil from one vessel to another vessel or the continuous sound of a church bell.

You can gradually reduce the number of ideas and come to one idea of one subject. When this one idea also dies you get the superconscious state or samadhi. When there is one idea it is called savikalpa samadhi, which is a lower stage. When this one idea also dies out and when there is not even a single idea, the mind becomes blank or void. There is mental vacuity. This is the stage of thoughtlessness described by Patanjali Maharishi in his raja yoga philosophy. You will have to rise above this blank vritti also and identify yourself with the Supreme Purusha or God, the silent witness of the mind who gives power and light to the mind. Then and then alone can you reach the highest goal of life.

Too much physical exertion, too much talking, too much eating, too much mixing with undesirable persons and too much walking will cause distraction of mind. Those who practise concentration must abandon these things. Whatever work you do, do it with perfect concentration. Never leave the work without finishing it completely.

Just as you take physical exercises and play games such as tennis and cricket in order to maintain physical health, you will have to maintain mental health also, by taking sattvic food, mental recreation of an innocent and harmless nature, change of thought, relaxation of mind by entertaining good, ennobling and sublime thoughts and by cultivating the habit of cheerfulness.

If you find it difficult to concentrate your mind within a room, go outside and sit in an open place or terrace, by the side of a river or in a quiet corner of a garden. You will have good concentration.

Remove the restlessness (rajas) and inertia (tamas) that envelop the purity (sattva) of the mind by pranayama, japa, enquiry into the nature of God and devotion. When it is freed from restlessness and inertia it will guide you. It will be your guru. Then the mind becomes fit for concentration.

Know that you are progressing in yoga and that purity is increasing when you are always cheerful, when the mind is even and concentrated.

If you want to increase your power of concentration you will have to reduce your worldly activities. You will have to observe the vow of silence every day for two hours or more. Then you will have more concentration and a richer inner life.

You should have real and intense thirst for God-realisation, then all obstacles will be obviated. Concentration will be quite easy for you then. Mere emotional bubbling for the time being out of sheer curiosity or for attaining psychic powers cannot bring any tangible results.

Train the mind in concentration on various objects, gross and subtle, and of various sizes — small, medium and big. In course of time a strong habit of concentration will be formed. The moment you sit for concentration the mood will come at once, quite easily. When you read a book you must read it with concentration. There is no use skipping over the pages in a hurried manner. Read one page in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Close the book. Concentrate on what you have read. Find parallel lines in the *Mahabharata, Upanishads* and *Bhagavatam*. Compare and contrast.

It will be very difficult to fix the mind on one thought in the beginning. Diminish the number of thoughts. Try to have the thought fixed on one subject.

Concentration will increase by lessening the number of thoughts. Certainly it is an uphill work to reduce the number of thoughts. In the beginning it will tax you much. The task will be very unpleasant. But later on you will rejoice, as you will get immense strength of mind and internal peace by reduction of thoughts. Armed with patience, perseverance, vigilance, fiery determination and iron will you can crush the thoughts easily just as you crush a lemon or orange with ease. After crushing them it will be easy for you to root them out. Mere crushing or suppression will not suffice. There may again be resurrection of thoughts. They should be totally eradicated, just as a loose tooth is rooted out.

So long as one's thoughts are not thoroughly destroyed through persistent practice, one should be ever concentrating his mind on one truth at a time. Through such unremitting practice, one-pointedness will accrue to the mind and instantly all the hosts of thoughts will vanish.

When concentration is deep and intense, none of the senses can operate.

Be cheerful and happy. Away with depression and gloom. There is nothing more infectious than depression. A depressed and gloomy man can radiate only unpleasant and morbid vibrations all around, he cannot radiate joy, peace and love. Therefore never come out of your room if you are depressed and gloomy lest you should spread the contagion around you. Live only to be a blessing to others. Radiate joy, love and peace. Depression eats the very core of your being and havocs like a canker. It is verily a deadly plague.

If emotions disturb you during concentration, do not mind them. They will pass away soon. If you try to drive them you will have to tax your will force. Have an indifferent attitude. The vedantin uses the formula 'I don't care, get out; I am only a witness of the mental modifications,' to drive the emotions. The bhakta simply prays and help comes from God.

You will have to coax the mind in the beginning just as you coax children. Mind is also like an ignorant child. Speak to the mind: "O mind, why do you run after false, worthless, perishable objects? You will undergo countless sufferings. Look at Lord Krishna, the beauty of beauties. You will get everlasting happiness. Why do you run to hear worldly love songs? Hear the songs of the Lord. Hear the soul-stirring names of God. You will be elevated." The mind will gradually leave off its old vicious habits and get itself fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord.

A man whose mind is filled with passion and all sorts of fantastic desires can hardly concentrate on any object even for a second. His mind will be jumping like a baboon. Regulate and master the breath. Subdue the senses and fix the mind on any pleasing object. Associate ideas of holiness and purity with the object.

It is easier to fix the mind on a pleasing object such as jasmine flower, mango or orange, or a loving friend. It is difficult to fix the mind in the beginning on any object which it dislikes — such as faecal matter, a cobra, an enemy, an ugly face, etc. Practise concentration till the mind is well established in the object of concentration. When the mind runs away from the object of concentration, bring it back again and again to the object. Lord Krishna says: "*As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the Self.*" *Bhagavad Gita* (VI-26)

Exercises in Concentration

(1) Ask your friend to show you some playing cards and then remove them. Immediately name the cards you have seen, the suit, number, etc.

(2) Read two or three pages of a book. Abandon all distracting thoughts. Focus your attention carefully. Allow the mind to associate, classify, group and compare the facts of the subject matter. You will get a fund of knowledge on the subject. The mind skipping over the pages inadvertently is no use. There are students who read a book within a few hours. If you ask them to repeat important

passages in the book, they will merely blink. If you attend to the subject on hand very carefully you will receive clear and strong impressions. If the impressions are strong you are cultivating a good memory.

(3) Sit in your favourite meditation pose about one foot from a watch. Concentrate on the 'tick-tick' sound. Whenever the mind runs let the sound of the watch bring it back, again and again. Just see how long the mind can be fixed continuously on the sound.

(4) Sit again in your favourite posture and keep a burning candle in front of you and try to concentrate on the flame. When your eyes get tired, close them and try to visualise the flame. Start by concentrating for half a minute and increase the time to five or ten minutes according to your taste, temperament and capacity. This will help you to go into deep concentration.

(5) Lie outside when the evening is balmy and concentrate on the moon. Whenever the mind runs, again and again bring it back to the image of the moon. This exercise is very beneficial in the case of persons having an emotional temperament.

(6) In the same manner, concentrate on any star you may single out from the millions of stars shining above.

(7) Lie outside in the open air and concentrate on the blue expansive sky above. Your mind will at once expand. You will feel elevated. The all-pervading sky will remind you of the infinite nature of the Self.

(8) Sit in a comfortable posture and concentrate on any one of the numerous abstract virtues such as mercy, love, peace and harmony. Dwell upon the virtue as long as you can.

(9) Sitting relaxed, listen to each heart-beat as the sound of OM. This will bring peace.

(10) Sit by the sea or the side of a river where you can hear a roaring sound like OM. Concentrate on that sound as long as you like. This is very thrilling and inspiring.

(11) Place a picture of Lord Jesus in front of you. Sit in your favourite meditative pose. With open eyes, gently concentrate on the picture until tears trickle down your cheeks. Rotate the mind on the cross, the chest, long hair, beautiful beard, round eyes and the various other limbs of his body; find the spiritual aura emanating from his head, and so on. Think of his divine attributes such as love, magnanimity, mercy and forbearance.

(12) Retire into a quiet room and sit in padmasana. Close the eyes. See what happens when you concentrate on an apple. You may think of its colour, shape, size and its different parts such as skin, pulp, seeds, etc. You may think of the places (Australia or Kashmir) where it is imported from. You may think of its acidic or sweet taste and its effects on the digestive system and blood.

Through the law of association, ideas of some other fruits also may try to enter. The mind may entertain some other extraneous ideas. It may begin to wander about. It may think of meeting a friend at the railway station at 4 p.m. It may think of purchasing a towel or a tin of tea or biscuits. It may ponder over some unpleasant happening that occurred the previous day. You must try to have a definite line of thought. There must not be any break in the line of thinking. You must not allow other thoughts, which are not connected with the object on hand, to enter. You will have to struggle hard to get success in this direction. The mind will try its level best to run in the old grooves and to take its old familiar road or beaten path. The attempt is somewhat like going up-hill.

(13) Some yogis try to become aware of the junction between waking and sleep, and then prolong that junction. This is a difficult task. At night sit in a quiet room and carefully watch the mind. You will be able to get at the state of junction. Practise regularly for three months. You will have success.

You will rejoice when you get even some success in concentration. Just as the laws of gravitation, cohesion, etc., operate in the physical plane, so also definite laws of thought — such as the law of association, law of relativity, law of continuity, etc. — operate in the mental plane or thought-world. Those who practise concentration should thoroughly understand these laws.

Concentration on Anahata Sounds

Dharana is the intense and perfect concentration of the mind upon some interior or exterior object or sound like anahata sounds, or any abstract idea, accompanied by complete abstraction (pratyahara) from everything pertaining to the external universe or the world of senses.

To concentrate on the anahata sounds, sit in your favourite asana. Close your eyes. Close the ears with your thumbs or plug the ears with wax or cotton. Try to hear the anahata sounds (mystic sounds). You will hear various kinds of sounds such as flute, violin, kettledrum, thunderstorm, conch, bells, the humming of a bee, etc. The sounds which you hear will make you deaf to all external sounds. In the beginning of your practice you will hear many loud sounds. They gradually increase in pitch, and then are heard more and more subtly. You should try to distinguish more and more subtle sounds. You may change your concentration from the subtle to the gross, or gross to subtle, but you should not allow your mind to be diverted from them towards other objects. Generally you will hear sounds in your right ear and occasionally you may hear in your left ear also, but try to stick to the sound of one ear and you will get one-pointedness of mind. This is an easy way to capture the mind, because it is enchanted by the sweet sound just as a snake is hypnotised by the notes of the snake charmer.

The mind, having at first concentrated itself on any one sound, fixes firmly to that and is absorbed in it. The mind, becoming insensible to the external impressions, becomes one with the sound, as milk with water, and then becomes rapidly absorbed in the akasha (space) where chit (consciousness) prevails. Being indifferent towards all objects, and having controlled the passions, by continual practice you should concentrate your attention upon the sound which destroys the mind.

There are ten stages in the hearing of anahata sounds. (You may experience the tenth stage without the first nine stages through the initiation of a guru.) In the first stage the body becomes chinchini; in the second, there is the breaking or affecting in the body. In the third there is the piercing; in the fourth the head shakes; in the fifth, the palate produces saliva; in the sixth, nectar is attained; in the seventh the knowledge of the hidden things in the world arises; in the eighth, paravaka is heard; in the ninth the body becomes invisible and the pure divine eye is developed; in the tenth you attain the state of Para Brahman. When the mind is destroyed, when virtues and sins are burnt away, you shine as the effulgent, immaculate, eternal, stainless, pure Brahman.

Objects of Concentration

The powers of the mind are always scattered and resist attempts at concentration. This oscillatory tendency is an innate characteristic of the mind stuff. Of the various methods employed to curtail and arrest this tossing of the mind, those using the medium of sound and sight stand prominent, because these two have a peculiar knack of catching the attention of and stilling the mind. It is seen how the hypnotist gently subdues the mind of the 'subject' by making the latter gaze steadily into his (the hypnotist's) eyes and listen to the monotonous repetition of his steady deliberate suggestions. We have still another clue to this when we note how the mother gently croons the little child into slumber. Also the schoolmaster's sharp, "Now then, boys, look here!" whenever he desires them to pay special attention to what he is saying, is significant. He feels that by getting them to fix their gaze on him he will draw the attention of their minds to his teaching as well.

There is great concentration when you play cards or chess, but the mind is not filled with pure and divine thoughts. The mental contents are of an undesirable nature. You can hardly experience a divine thrill, ecstasy and elevation of mind when it is filled with impure thoughts. Every object has its own mental associations. You will have to fill up the mind with sublime spiritual thoughts, then only will the mind be expurgated of all worldly thoughts. The picture of Lord Jesus or Buddha or Krishna is associated with sublime, soul-stirring ideas; chess and cards are associated with ideas of gambling, cheating and so forth.

Algebra, the science of abstract numbers cannot be understood without a preliminary practice and knowledge of arithmetic, the science of concrete numbers. Even so, abstract meditation is impossible without a preliminary practice of concentration on a concrete form in the beginning. Approach to the invisible and the unknown is to be made through the visible and the known. Therefore in the course of spiritual discipline the methods of developing concentration take the form of gazing steadily at a dot, the symbol of the pranava (OM), the mantra or the figure of the favourite chosen deity. With some others it is done by the audible repetition of the mantra or the Lord's Name, or OM, or some select chants with regular rhythm and intonation. By these means the mind gradually gets indrawn and focussed. As this state deepens the person slowly loses awareness of his surroundings. Japa of any mantra and pranayama will steady the mind, remove its tossing and increase the power of concentration. Concentration can be done only if you are free from all distractions.

The mind should be trained to concentrate on gross objects in the beginning, and later on you can successfully concentrate on subtle objects and abstract ideas. Regularity in the practice is of paramount importance.

In trying to concentrate your mind or project a thought even, you will find that you require naturally to form images in your mind. You cannot help it. It is easy to concentrate the mind on external objects. The mind has a natural tendency to go outwards. Desire is a mode of the emotive mind. It has got a power of externalizing the mind.

The mind generally wanders wildly at random. When it thinks of one object, in a second it leaves that object and runs to another object like a monkey, then to a third object and so on. It cannot stick to one point. Do not allow it to create hundreds of thought forms. Make it hold on to one thought-form for half an hour. Make it shape itself into one shape and try to keep this shape for hours together through constant and incessant practise.

Introspect and watch the mind carefully. Live alone. Avoid company. Do not mix. This is important. Do not allow the mind to dissipate its energy in vain — on vain thoughts, vain worry, vain imagination and vain fear and forebodings.

Attention and Interest

You must evidence good interest in the practice of concentration, then only will your whole attention be directed towards the object upon which you wish to concentrate. There can really be no concentration without a remarkable degree of interest and attention shown by the practitioner. You must, therefore, know what these two words mean.

Attention is the steady application of the mind. It is the focussing of consciousness on some chosen object. Through attention you can develop your mental faculties and capacities. When there is attention there is also concentration. Attention should be cultivated gradually. It is not a special process. It is the whole mental process in one of its aspects.

Perception always involves attention. To perceive is to attend. Through attention you get a clear and distinct knowledge of objects. The entire energy is focussed on the object towards which attention is directed. Full and complete information is gained. During attention all the dissipated rays of the mind are collected. There is effort or struggle in attention. Through attention a deep impression of anything is made in the mind. If you have good attention you can attend to the matter in hand exclusively. An attentive man has a very good memory. He is very vigilant and circumspect. He is nimble and alert.

Attention plays a very great part in concentration. It is the basis of will. When it is properly guided and directed towards the internal world for the purpose of introspection, it will analyse the mind and illumine very many astounding facts for you.

Attention is focussing of consciousness. It is one of the signs of a trained will. It is found in men of strong mentality. It is a rare faculty. Brahmacharya wonderfully develops this power. It is easy to fasten the mind on an object which the mind likes best, but a yogi who possesses this faculty can even fix the mind on an unpleasant object for a very long time. Attention can be cultivated and developed by persistent practice. All the great men of the world who have achieved greatness have risen up through this faculty.

Throw your entire attention into whatever you happen to be doing at the moment. Practise attention on unpleasant tasks from which you have been shrinking before, on account of their unpleasantness. Throw interest upon uninteresting objects and ideas. Hold them before your mind. Interest will slowly manifest. Many mental weaknesses will vanish. The mind will become stronger and stronger.

The force with which anything strikes the mind is generally in proportion to the degree of attention bestowed upon it. Moreover, the great art of memory is attention, and inattentive people have bad memories.

The human mind has the power of attending to only one object at a time, although it is able to pass from one object to another with a marvellous degree of speed, so rapidly in fact that some have held that it can grasp several things at a time. But the best authorities, eastern and western, hold to the 'single idea' theory as being correct. It agrees with one's daily experience also.

If you analyse carefully the mental functions or operations, no one process can be singled out and called attention. It is not possible to separate attention as a distinct function. You observe something, therefore you are attentive.

Attention belongs to every state of consciousness and is present in every field of consciousness. An attentive student in the spiritual path can listen to scriptures in an efficient manner. The military officer says, "Attention!" and the soldier is ready with his gun to carry out his behests. An attentive soldier alone can hit the mark. No one can get success either in temporal or spiritual pursuits without attention.

There are yogis who seem to do eight or ten or even a hundred things at a time. This is not strange. The whole secret lies in the fact that they have developed their attention to a remarkable degree. All the great men of the world possess this faculty in varying degrees.

Attention is of two kinds, viz., external attention and internal attention. When the attention is directed towards external objects, it is called external attention. When it is directed internally, within the mind upon mental objects and ideas, it is known as internal attention.

There are again two other kinds of attention viz., voluntary attention and involuntary attention. When the attention is directed towards some external object, by an effort of the will, it is called voluntary attention. When you have an express volition to attend to this or that, it is called voluntary attention. The man understands why he perceives. Some deliberate intention, incentive, goal or purpose is definitely involved. Voluntary attention needs effort, will, determination and some mental training. This is cultivated by practice and perseverance. The benefits derived by the practice of attention are incalculable. Involuntary attention is quite common. This does not demand any practice. There is no effort of the will. The attention is induced by the beauty and attractive nature of the object. Individuals perceive without knowing why and without instruction. Young children possess this power of involuntary attention to a greater degree than grown-up people.

If a man is not observant, he is not attentive. If he observes something, he is said to be attentive. Intention, purpose, hope, expectation, desire, belief, wish, knowledge, aim, goal and needs serve to determine attention. You will have to note carefully the degree, duration, range, forms, fluctuations and conflicts of attention.

There is great attention if the object is very pleasing. You will have to create interest, then there will be attention. If the attention gets diminished, change your attention to another pleasant object. By patient training you can direct the mind to attend to an unpleasant object also, by creating interest. Then you will grow strong.

Some say that we attend to things because they are very interesting, but others are of the opinion that things are interesting because we attend to them or because we are likely to attend to them. We do not attend to them if they are not interesting.

By the constant practice and ever-renewed effort of attention, a subject that in the beginning was dry and uninteresting may become full of interest when you master it and learn its meaning and its issues. The power of concentrating your attention on the subject may become stronger.

If you closely watch, you will note that you observe different objects at different times. This perception of now one object and now another, when the physical conditions are constant, is known as fluctuations of attention. Attention is changing. The objects themselves change or fluctuate but there is no fluctuation in the observing individual himself. The mind has not been trained to bear prolonged attention. It gets disgusted through monotony and wants to run towards some other pleasing object. You may say, "I am going to attend to one thing only," but you will soon find that even though you attempt very hard, you suddenly perceive something else. The attention wavers.

Interest develops attention. It is difficult to fix the mind on an uninteresting object. When a professor is lecturing, when the subject is abstract and metaphysical many people leave the hall quietly because they cannot attend to a subject which is not interesting; but if the same professor sings and tells some interesting and thrilling stories, all people hear him with rapt attention. There is pin-drop silence. Lecturers should know the art of attracting the minds of the hearers. They will have to change the tone to talk with force and emphasis. They will have to watch the audience and see whether they are attentive or not. They will have to change the subject matter for a short while and bring in some nice stories and suitable illustrations. They will have to look at the hearers directly in their eyes. So many things are necessary if one wants to become a successful lecturer, and wants to make the hearers attentive.

Napoleon, Gladstone, Arjuna and Jnanadeva all had wonderful powers of attention. They could fix their minds on any object. All scientists and occultists possess attention to a remarkable degree. They cultivate it by patient, regular and systematic practice. A judge and surgeon can get positive success in their respective professions only if they are endowed with the power of attention to a high degree.

When you do any work, plunge yourself in it. Forget yourself. Lose the self. Concentrate upon the work. Shut out all other thoughts. When you do one thing do not think of any other thing. When you study one book do not think of any other book. Fix the mind there steadily like the arrow-maker who had no consciousness of his surroundings. Eminent scientists are so busy and attentive in their experiments and researches in their laboratories that they forget to take food even for days together. Once a scientist was very busy at his work. His wife, who was living in another district, had a serious calamity. She came running up to him in the laboratory, with profuse tears in her eyes. Strange to say, the scientist was not a bit agitated. He was so very attentive to his work that he even forgot that she was his own wife! He said: "Madam! Weep for some more time. Let me make chemical analysis of your tears."

Once some gentleman invited Sir Isaac Newton for dinner. Newton repaired to his host's bungalow and took his seat in the drawing room. The gentleman forgot all about Newton, took his dinner and proceeded to his office. Newton was musing within himself very absorbedly on some important point of science. He did not stir from his seat. He forgot all about his dinner and remained in the same chair like a statue for a long time. The next morning the host saw Newton in the drawing room and then only remembered having invited him for dinner. He felt sorry for his forgetfulness and apologised to Sir Isaac in a meek voice. What wonderful power of attention Sir Isaac Newton had! All geniuses possess this power to an infinite degree.

When a great misfortune has befallen you, or when you pass in review a certain course of conduct in order to find out the cause of the failure, it may take possession of your mind to such a degree that no effort of the will can make you cease from thinking over it. An article has to be written, a book is in the process of preparation; the work is carried on even if there is loss of sleep and you are unable to tear yourself away from it. The attention which began voluntarily has taken entire hold of the field of consciousness.

If you possess strong power of attention, anything that the mind receives will be deeply impressed. Only an attentive man can develop his will. A mixture of attention, application and interest can work wonders. There is no doubt of this. A man of ordinary intellect with highly developed attention can turn over more work than a highly intellectual man who has poor attention.

If you attend to one thing at a time you will get profound knowledge of that subject in its various aspects. The ordinary untrained man of the world generally attends to several things at a time. He allows many things to enter the gates of his mental factory. That is the reason why he has a clouded or turbid mind. There is no clarity of thought. He cannot do the process of analysis and synthesis. He is bewildered. He cannot express his ideas clearly, whereas the disciplined man can attend to a subject exclusively as long as he likes. He extracts full and detailed information about one subject or object and then takes up another. Attention is an important faculty of a yogi.

Every little act demands concentration and your whole-hearted attention. If you want to pass a thread through the eye of the needle you must remove all fibres that are disjointed. Then you must make it a single fibre and with great care and one-pointed thought, pass the thread into the needle.

When you climb a mountain, or go down a steep descent, you will have to be very careful, otherwise you will slip and fall into the deep abyss below. When you ride on a bicycle, if you talk to your friend on the road a motor car might dash against you from behind. If you are a bit absent-minded when you walk on the road you will trip against a stone and fall down. A careless barber will cut the nose of his customer. A careless washerman will burn the clothes of his master. A sleepy aspirant will dash his head against the wall or fall down prostrate on the ground. Therefore, you must develop attention. Attention leads to concentration.

When you take up any work, apply your whole heart, full mind and soul to the work. Do it with perfect concentration. What another can do in six hours, you can turn out within half an hour, smoothly and in a methodical and orderly manner. This is yoga activity. You will be taken as an accomplished yogi. Even when you study, study the subject with perfect concentration. Do not allow the mind to wander. You must shut out all external sounds. Fix the gaze at one point. Do not allow the eyes to wander. When you study one subject do not think of a movie or sweetmeats or a friend. The whole world must be dead to you for the time being. Such must the nature of your concentration. It will come to you after some steady and constant endeavours.

Be not troubled. Be not discouraged. There will be some delay. Wait coolly and patiently. Rome was not built in a day. It is all a question of time. Do not leave the practice even for a day, even when you are sick. In your failure lies the secret of your success, and in your weakness the secret of your strength. Plod on. Push on. Gird up your loins. Nil desperandum. Be bold. March on courageously. Be cheerful. A brilliant future is awaiting thee. Practise. Feel. Rejoice. Become a yogi or world figure. Be sincere and earnest. Rise up. Awake. Thy light has come. O my dear children of Light and Immortality. It is 3.30 a.m., brahmamuhurta. This is the best time to practise concentration on Atman, memory and will-culture, and to catch hold of the mind. Sit in your favourite meditation posture and do vigorous practice now. May success and divine glory attend on thee. Melt the bubble mind in Brahman, the ocean of knowledge, and enjoy supreme bliss.

Hatha Yoga Techniques

*Tratak is one of the cleansing techniques in the light of hatha yoga philosophy. Tratak also plays a very prominent part in raja yoga and jnana yoga.

Tratak is steady gazing. Write the word OM in black ink on the wall. Sit in front of the drawing. Concentrate on it with open eyes till tears come into the eyes. Then close the eyes. Visualise the picture of OM. Then open the eyes and again gaze till tears flow. Gradually increase the period. There are students who can gaze for one hour. Instead of OM you may draw a big black dot on white paper and fix it on the wall. Gaze at this black dot on the paper. The wall will present a golden colour during tratak.

You can also do tratak on a candle flame, a bright star or the moon, on any picture of the Lord — either Krishna, Rama, Siva or Lord Jesus.

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Practise tratak for one minute on the first day. Gradually increase the period every week. Don't strain the eyes. Do it gently with ease and comfort, as long as you conveniently can. Repeat your mantra, Hari Om, Sri Ram or Gayatri during tratak. In some people who have weak eye capillaries the eyes may become red. They need not be alarmed unnecessarily as the redness of the eyes will pass off quickly.

Practise tratak for six months. Then you can take up advanced lessons in concentration and meditation. Be regular and systematic in your sadhana. If there is a break, make up the deficiency or loss on the next day.

Tratak steadies the wandering mind and removes tossing of the mind. It gives tremendous power, removes a host of ophthalmic ailments and brings siddhis.

Tratak with open eyes is followed by visualisation, which is the calling up of a clear image of anything. Tratak and visualisation help a lot in concentration.

Gaze at the picture of the Lord (your tutelary deity) for a few minutes and then close your eyes. Try to visualise the picture mentally. You will have a well-defined or clear-cut picture of the Lord. When it fades, open your eyes and gaze. Repeat the process five or six times. You will be able to mentally visualise it clearly after some months' practice.

If you find it difficult to visualise the whole picture, try to visualise any part. Try to produce even a hazy picture. By repeated practice the hazy picture will assume a well-defined, clear-cut form. If you find this difficult, fix the mind on the effulgent light in the heart and take this as the form of the Lord or Devi.

Do not bother yourself if you are not able to have perfect visualisation of the picture of the Lord with closed eyes. Continue your practice vigorously and regularly. You will succeed. What is wanted is love for the Lord. Cultivate this more and more. Let it flow unceasingly and spontaneously. This is more important than visualisation.

Nasikagra chakra is fixing the gaze on the tip of the nose. This is also called the nasal gaze. Do not make any violent effort. Gently look at the tip of the nose. Practise for one minute in the beginning. Gradually increase the time to half an hour or more. This practice steadies the mind and develops the power of concentration. Even when you walk you can keep up this practice.

Bhrumadhya drishti is gazing at the ajna chakra, between the two eyebrows. The seat of the mind is the ajna chakra. The mind can be controlled easily if you concentrate there. In this you should direct the gaze towards the ajna chakra with closed eyes. If you practise it with open eyes it may produce headaches and foreign particles may fall into the eyes. There may be distraction of the mind also. Do not strain the eyes. Practise gently from half a minute to half an hour. There must not be the least violence in this practice. Gradually increase the period. This yoga kriya removes tossing of the mind and develops concentration.

When you practise concentration at the tip of the nose you will experience various sorts of fragrance. When you concentrate between the eyebrows you will see lights. These are experiences to give you encouragement, to push you up in the spiritual path and convince you of the existence of transcendental or super-physical things. Do not stop your sadhana now.

You can concentrate also on the heart or anahata chakra. This is the seat of emotion and feeling. A bhakta should concentrate there. He who concentrates on the heart gets great bliss.

The crown of the head or sahasrara is another centre for concentration. Some vedantins concentrate there.

Stick to one centre of concentration. Cling to it tenaciously. Never change it. The guru will select a centre of concentration for you if you are a student of faith. If you are a man of self-reliance you can select a centre for yourself.

A hatha yogi tries to concentrate his mind by having his breath controlled through pranayama. Kumbhaka or retention of breath also helps concentration. It checks the velocity of the mind and makes it move in smaller circles and ultimately curbs all its wanderings and thereby renders it fit for concentration.

The raja yogi tries to concentrate his mind by restraining the various modifications of the mind by not allowing the mind to assume various shapes of objects. He does not care for control of breath but his breath becomes necessarily controlled when his mind is concentrated.

DHYANA

A continuous flow of perceptions (or thought) is dhyana, meditation.
(III-2)

What is Meditation?

Meditation is the flow of continuous thought of one thing, of God, the Atman. It is the keeping up of one idea of God alone always, like the continuous flow of oil.

Meditation follows concentration. When persisted in and perfected it brings about the experience of super-consciousness or samadhi, the ultimate state of Self-awareness or realisation.

That state of the mind wherein there are no thoughts, is meditation. Meditation proceeds from the mind. All worldly thoughts are shut out from the mind. The mind is filled or saturated with divine thoughts, with the divine glory, the divine presence. "*Though men should perform tapas standing on one leg for a period of one thousand years, it will not, in the least, be equal to one-sixteenth part of dhyana yoga (meditation).* "*Paingala Upanishad.*

Meditation is the only way to attain salvation. It kills all pains, sufferings and sorrows and destroys all causes of sorrow. It gives the vision of unity and induces a sense of oneness. Meditation is a balloon or a parachute or an aeroplane that helps the aspirant to soar high into the realms of eternal bliss, everlasting peace and undying joy.

Meditation is the royal road to attain God-head. It is the grand trunk road which takes the aspirant direct to the destination of divine consciousness. It is the mystic ladder which takes the yoga student from earth to heaven, it is the divine ladder that pushes them to the heights of asamprajnata samadhi, it is the step in the staircase of unbounded intelligence to take the aspirant to the highest storey of non-dual meditation and kaivalya mukti (liberation) of a vedantin. Without it no spiritual progress is possible. It is the aerial ropeway that allows the devotee to glide easily to the other shore of samadhi and drink the honey of love and the nectar of immortality.

Every human being has within himself various tremendous powers, potentialities, capacities and latent faculties of which he has no conception. He is a magazine of power and knowledge. As he evolves he unfolds new powers, new faculties, new qualities. He must awaken these dormant powers and faculties by the practice of meditation and yoga. He must develop his will and control his senses and mind. He must purify himself and practise regular meditation. Then only can he become a superman or God-man; then only can he change his environment and influence others; then only can he subdue other minds, conquer internal and external nature and enter into the super-conscious state.

Just as the light is burning within the hurricane lamp, so also is the divine flame burning from time immemorial in the lamp of your heart. Close your eyes. Merge yourself within the divine flame. Plunge deep into the chambers of your heart. Meditate on this divine flame and become one with the flame of God.

If the wick within the lamp is small, the light will also be small. If the wick is big, the light also will be powerful. Similarly, if the jiva (individual soul) is pure, if he practises meditation, the manifestation or expression of the Self will be powerful. He will radiate a big light. If he is unregenerate and impure he will be like burnt up charcoal. The bigger the wick, the greater the light. Likewise, the purer the soul, the greater the expression.

Meditation is the only valuable asset for you. Success in yoga is possible only if the aspirant practises profound and constant meditation. To meditate is our foremost duty. It is for that we have taken our birth here. To concentrate, to purify, to meditate and realise our essential divine nature is our foremost duty. Realisation cuts the knots of ignorance, desire and action and gives permanent satisfaction, everlasting peace and eternal bliss.

What Happens in Meditation?

During meditation the mind becomes calm, serene and steady. The various rays of the mind are collected and focussed on the object of meditation. There will be no tossing of the mind. One idea alone occupies the mind. The whole energy of the mind is concentrated on that one idea. The senses become still. They do not function. Where there is deep concentration there is no consciousness of the body and surroundings. He who has good concentration can visualise the picture of the Lord very clearly within the twinkling of an eye.

Do not try to drive away the unimportant thoughts. The more you try the more they will return, the more they will gain strength. You will tax your energy. Fill the mind with divine thoughts. The unimportant thoughts will gradually vanish.

All mental modifications such as anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., assume subtle forms when you practise meditation. They are thinned out. They should be eradicated in toto through samadhi or blissful union with the Lord. Then only are you quite safe. Latent mental impulses will be waiting for opportunities to assume a grave and expanded form. You should be very careful and vigilant.

An aspirant says: "I am able to meditate in one posture for three hours. In the end I become senseless but I do not fall on the ground." If there is real meditation you will never become senseless, you will experience perfect awareness. This other is a negative undesirable mental state. You will have to get over this state by keeping up perfect vigilance.

Those who practise meditation will find that they are more sensitive than the people who do not meditate and because of that the strain on the physical body is enormous.

Considerable changes take place in the mind, brain and the nervous system by the practice of meditation. New nerve currents, new vibrations, new avenues, new grooves, new cells, new channels are all formed. The whole mind and nervous system are remodelled. You will develop a new heart, a new mind, new sensations, new feelings, new modes of thinking and a new view of the universe (as God in manifestation). The purifying process leads to a deeper insight into Truth. This is the action of the grace of the Lord upon the soul in meditation.

When the mind becomes steady in meditation the eyeballs also become steady. A yogi whose mind is calm will have a steady eye.

There will be no winking at all. The eyes will be lustrous, red or pure white.

In the beginning of your practice you may get jerks of the hands, legs, trunk and the whole body. Sometimes the jerk is very terrible. Do not be afraid, do not be troubled. It is nothing, it can do nothing. It is due to sudden muscular contraction from influence of new nerve stimuli, when the prana becomes slow and the outward vibrations make the mind come down from its union with the Lord to the level of physical consciousness. Remember that new nerve currents are formed now owing to the purification of the nadis. The jerks will pass off after some time. At times there is tremor of the body during meditation. This is due to the prana being taken up to the brain from the trunk, etc. in the process of meditation. Do not be afraid. Do not stop the meditation. You will have to pass through all these stages. When you get these you are improving, you are progressing. Plod on and persevere. Be cheerful. Help is from within, from the Inner Ruler. These are all new sensations. Be courageous and bold. Courage is an important qualification and virtue for aspirants. Cultivate this positive quality.

When your meditation becomes deep you will lose consciousness of the body. You will feel that there is no body. You will experience immense joy. There will be mental consciousness. Some lose sensation in the legs, then in the spinal column, back, the trunk and the hands. When the sensation is lost in these parts it feels that the head is suspended in the air.

When you practise rigorous meditation, natural retention of breath without inhalation and exhalation will come by itself. When this comes you will enjoy immense peace and you will have one-pointed mind.

You will feel that will-power is radiating from you. Your consciousness will be deeper now. Thoughts of God will start the spiritual currents in the body. Do not check these currents. (If heat is produced in the head, apply butter, amalaka oil or brahmi oil. Take cold bath three times during summer. Take butter and sugar-candy.)

When you fix the mind, either on Sri Krishna, Lord Siva or the Atman, even for five minutes, sattva guna is infused into the mind. Subtle desires are thinned out. You feel peace and bliss during the five minutes. You can, with the subtle intellect, compare this bliss from meditation with the transitory sensual pleasures. You will find that this bliss from meditation is a million times superior to sensual pleasures. Meditate and feel this bliss. Then you will know the real value.

During meditation, when your mind is purer, you will be inspired. The mind will be composing fine poems and solving intricate problems of life. Stamp out these pure thoughts also. This is all dissipation of mental energy. Soar higher and higher in the Atman only.

Just as salt melts in water, the pure mind during meditation melts in silence in Brahman, its substratum.

The object of meditation will come before you much quicker if you practise regular meditation. You will feel as if you are covered by the object on which you meditate. It will seem as if the whole space is illumined. Sometimes you will experience the sound of ringing bells. You will feel the inner peace of the soul.

When your meditation becomes deep, you generally operate through the subtle causal body only. This becomes your normal consciousness. Yogis and bhaktas like Lord Gauranga, Tuka Ram and Tulsidas identified themselves with their causal body and had this as their normal consciousness. A bhakta, too, becomes one with Brahman. He has divine auspiciousness, yet he has a thin ethereal body. He keeps up his individuality. A whirlpool is one with the whole mass of the water. It has a separate existence also. Similar is the case with the bhakta who has a life with his causal body.

During meditation you will have no idea of time. You will not hear any sounds. You will forget your name and all sorts of relationships with others. You will have no consciousness of your body or surroundings. You will have equanimity of mind. You will not hear any sounds. There will be stoppage of up-going and down-going sensations. The consciousness of egoism will also gradually vanish. You will experience inexplicable joy and indescribable happiness. Gradually, reasoning and reflection also will cease.

After a short practice of meditation you will feel that the body gets lighter in a short time, say fifteen or thirty minutes, after you have taken your seat. You may be semi-conscious of the body also. There is a great deal of happiness owing to concentration. This happinesss resulting from concentration-ananda (bliss) is quite different from sensual pleasures. You must be able to differentiate between these two pleasures through the intuitive mind rendered subtle by constant spiritual practice and meditation. Concentration and meditation have a power to sharpen the intellect. A trained intellect can comprehend subtle, philosophical, abstruse problems beautifully well. A disciplined intellect that can differentiate between the happiness derived from concentration and deep meditation, and the happiness derived from worldly pleasures, will naturally run daily to enjoy this kind of new happiness. Such a mind will loathe sensual pleasures. There will be extreme abhorrence and positive aversion to objects. It is but natural, because this kind of happiness is more lasting, sustained, self-contained and real, as it emanates from the Atman. You can distinctly feel that the mind is moving, that it is leaving its seat in the brain, and that it is trying to go to its original abode. You know that it has left its old groove and is now passing into a new groove.

In the beginning the aspirant remains in a state of bliss for some time. He comes down. By constant practice of incessant meditation he continues to remain in that exalted state forever. Later on the body idea completely vanishes.

A sudden stroke of mystic illumination puts an end to all empirical existence altogether and the very idea or remembrance of such a thing as the world, or the narrow individuality of the spirit in this world, absolutely leaves.

Benefits of Meditation

This world is full of miseries and sufferings. If you want to get rid of the pains and afflictions of this worldly existence (samsara), you must practise meditation. Meditation is the pathway to divinity. It is the royal road to the kingdom of Brahman. It is a mysterious ladder which reaches from earth to heaven, from error to truth, from darkness to light, from pain to bliss, from restlessness to abiding peace, from ignorance to knowledge, from mortality to immortality. Meditation leads to knowledge of the Self which brings about eternal peace and supreme bliss. Meditation prepares you for the integral experiences of direct intuitive knowledge.

Truth is Brahman. Truth is Atman. Truth is quite pure and simple. You cannot realise the Truth without reflection and meditation. Be silent. Know thyself. Know That. Melt the mind in That.

The fire of meditation annihilates all foulness due to vice. Then suddenly comes knowledge of divine wisdom which directly leads to liberation or final emancipation.

Regular meditation opens the avenues of intuitional knowledge, makes the mind calm and steady, awakens an ecstatic feeling and brings the yoga student in contact with the source or the supreme Purusha. If there are doubts they are all cleared by themselves when you march on the path of dhyana yoga steadily. You will yourself feel the way to place your footstep in the next rung of the spiritual ladder. A mysterious inner voice will guide you.

If you wind a watch at night it will run smoothly for twenty-four hours. Even so, if you meditate for one or two hours in the brahmamuhurta (one and a half hours before sunrise) you can work very peacefully throughout the day. Nothing can disturb your mind. The whole system will be charged with spiritual vibrations.

Many of your doubts will be cleared by themselves during meditation. Some will have to wait for some time for the clearance of some doubts. However much the teacher explains to you, you cannot understand certain things at a certain time. You will have to evolve a little more. When you have evolved, those doubts which tormented you three years ago will become clear now.

Meditation gives a lot of spiritual strength, peace, new vigour and vitality. It is the best mental tonic. If a meditator gets irritated very often it shows he is not doing good uninterrupted meditation. There is something wrong in his spiritual practices (sadhana).

Meditation develops strong and pure thoughts. Mental images are clear-cut and well-defined. Good thoughts are well-grounded. Through clarification of ideas, confusion vanishes.

Meditation is a powerful tonic. It is a mental and nervine tonic as well. The holy vibrations penetrate all the cells of the body and cure its diseases. Those who meditate save doctor's bills. The powerful, soothing waves that arise during meditation exercise a benign influence on the mind, nerves, organs and cells of the body. The divine energy freely flows from the feet of the Lord to the different systems of the sadhaka (aspirant). Meditation itself is a panacea for all diseases. (If you are seriously ailing you can do japa and light meditation while lying on the bed.)

If you can meditate for half an hour daily you will be able to engage yourself with peace and spiritual strength in the battle of life for one week through the force of this meditation. Such is the beneficial result of meditation. As you have to move with different minds of peculiar natures in your daily life, get the strength and peace from meditation and you will have no trouble and worry.

A yogi who meditates regularly has a magnetic and charming personality. Those who come in contact with him are much influenced by his sweet voice, powerful speech, lustrous eyes, brilliant complexion, strong healthy body, good behaviour, virtuous quality and divine nature. Just as a grain of salt dropped in a basin of water dissolves and becomes distributed throughout the whole water, just as sweet fragrance of jasmine pervades the air, so also the yogi's spiritual aura infiltrates into the minds of others. People draw joy, peace and strength from him. They are inspired by his speech and get elevation of mind by mere contact with him.

Meditation is the only way for attaining immortality and eternal bliss. Those who do not concentrate and meditate are slayers of Atman. They are in fact living corpses and miserable wretches. They are very poor people. They are hopeless misers indeed.

The wise cut asunder the knot of egoism by the sharp sword of constant meditation. Then dawns supreme knowledge of the Self or full inner illumination or Self-realisation. The liberated sage has neither doubts nor delusion. All the bonds of karma are rent asunder. Therefore, be ever engaged in meditation. This is the master-key for opening the realms of eternal bliss. It may be tiring and disgusting in the beginning, because the mind will be running away from the point every now and then. After some practice it will be focussed in the centre. You will be immersed in divine bliss.

The man who cannot fix his mind in meditation cannot have knowledge of the Self. The unsteady man cannot practise any meditation. He cannot have any intense devotion to knowledge of the Self or any burning longing for liberation or moksha. He who does not practise any meditation cannot possess peace of mind. How can there be happiness for the unpeaceful?

Meditate, meditate. Do not lose even a single minute. Meditation will remove all the miseries of life. That is the only way. Meditation is the enemy of the mind. It brings about the death of the mind.

Like attracts like. This is a great law. Entertain good thoughts. Do meditation. You will attract sadhus, yogis and siddhas. You will be benefited by their vibrations. Your new spiritual vibration will attract them!

Even Indra, who is rolling in abundant wealth, cannot enjoy that bliss which comes to a sage who has a self-centred mind free from desires, who is resting in his own essential nature and who has equal vision for all.

Ignorant people bring a false charge that the sadhus who meditate in caves are selfish. The mahatma who meditates in a solitary cave in the Himalayas helps the world more through his spiritual vibrations than the sadhu who preaches on the platform. When the meditator becomes mindless he pervades and permeates the whole world. Just as sound vibrations travel in the ethereal space, so also the spiritual vibrations of a meditator travel a long distance and bring peace and strength to thousands.

Learn the science of self-control. Possess a steady mind by constant practice of meditation. Fix your mind upon God. You will have divine life. There will be an inflooding of all divine qualities. All negative tendencies will vanish and all conflicting forces will be reconciled. You will enjoy perfect harmony, undisturbed happiness and abiding peace.

Great rishis and sages of yore like Yajnavalkya, Uddalaka, etc., acquired the knowledge of the Self — which is a means to secure the highest communion — through intense meditation.

The attainment of cosmic consciousness is permanent in realised souls. It is like a glimpse in the beginning. Through steady meditation it becomes permanent or natural.

Without the help of meditation you cannot attain knowledge of the Self. Without its aid you cannot grow into the divine state. Without it you cannot liberate yourself from the trammels of the mind, and attain immortality. If you do not practise meditation the supreme splendour and fadeless glories of the Atman will remain hidden from you. Tear the veils that cover the soul by practising regular meditation. By constant meditation rend asunder the five sheaths that screen the Atman, and then attain the final beatitude of life.

Meditation and Rest

Fatigue of the senses demands rest. Hence sleep supervenes at night, rhythmically. Motion and rest are rhythmical processes in life. The mind moves about in the avenues of the senses through the force of desires. There is subtle working of the mind in dream also, hence you do not get good rest in sleep. Real rest is secured in meditation, and meditation only. This rest is far superior to the rest that is obtained from sleep. Sound sleep even for half or one hour will suffice for the man who regularly meditates.

The mind is fully concentrated during meditation. It is far away from objects and very near the Atman. There are no currents during meditation owing to absence of objects. Consequently there is the manifestation of solid, lasting, real spiritual bliss with complete and genuine rest. You must practise meditation, you must feel it yourself. Then you will agree with me.

You may not enjoy the rest fully in the beginning of the practice, because at the outset there is a good deal of wrestling between the will and innate nature, the old mental tendencies and the new tendencies, old habits and new habits, effort and old conduct. The mind revolts. When the mind is thinned out, when it has reached the thread-like state, you will enjoy good rest in meditation. You can then gradually cut short your sleep to three or four hours.

Generally, when you have dreamless or deep sound sleep, either you do not remember what you dreamt of, or you fall into absolute unconsciousness which is almost death — a taste of death. But in meditation there is sleep in which you enter into an absolute silence, immortality and peace in all parts of your being, and your consciousness merges into Sat-chid-ananda (existence, knowledge, bliss). You can hardly call it sleep, for there is perfect awareness. In that condition you can remain for a few minutes. It will give you more rest and refreshment than hours of ordinary sleep. You cannot have it by chance. It requires long training.

Mind and Meditation

Mind is a power born of the spirit, because it is through mind that God manifests Himself in the differentiated universe of names and forms. Mind is nothing but a bundle of thoughts and habits. Make use of them as an aid in spiritual endeavour.

There are many terms in the *Bhagavad Gita* which denote that you will have to give your full mind, entire cent-per-cent, to God. Then only will you have Self-realisation. Even if one ray of mind runs outside it is impossible to attain God-consciousness.

If you remove the oscillation of the mind you will get one-pointedness of mind, which is a thing unknown to many. Max Muller writes: "*One-pointedness of mind is impossible for us (westerners) when our minds are diverted in various directions through newspapers, telegrams, postal communications, etc.*" It is an indispensable condition in all religious and philosophical speculations, and in meditation.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* Lord Krishna prescribes a spiritual practice for removing tossing of the mind: "*As often as the wavering and unsteady mind goes forth, so often reining it in, let him bring it under the control of the Self. Abandoning without reserve all desires born of the imagination by the mind, curbing in the aggregate of the senses on every side, little by little let him gain tranquillity by means of reason controlled by steadiness; having made the mind abide in the Self, let him not think of anything.*" (VI-24,25,26)

When you begin to sweep a room that was kept closed for six months, various kinds of dirt come out from the corners of the room. Similarly during meditation, under pressure of yoga and through the grace of God, various kinds of impurities float about on the surface of the mind. Bravely remove them, one by one, by suitable methods and counter-virtues, with patience and strenuous efforts. The old vicious habitual desires take revenge when you try to suppress them. Do not be afraid, they lose their strength after some time. You have to tame the mind just as you tame a wild elephant or a tiger. Do not indulge in vicious thoughts which serve as food for the mind. Make the mind self-introspective. Substitute good, virtuous, sublime thoughts. Feed the mind with ennobling aspirations and ideas. Old vicious tendencies will be gradually thinned out and eventually obliterated.

You must try your level best to keep a serene mind always. Meditation can proceed from a serene mind only. A serene mind is a valuable spiritual asset for you.

There are many valuable trainings of the mind which are essential to mental culture: for instance, the training of the memory, the cultivation of reflection, discrimination and enquiry. The practice of meditation itself is a potent clarifier of the memory. The practice of memory-culture powerfully helps the attainment of meditation.

Do not wrestle with the mind during meditation. It is a serious mistake. Many neophytes commit this grave error. That is the reason why they soon get easily tired. They get headache and have to get up very often to pass urine during the course of meditation, owing to the irritation set up in the micturition centre in the spinal cord.

Do not try to drive away the unimportant and irrelevant thoughts. The more you try the more will they return and the more strength will they gain. You will only tax your energy and will. Become indifferent. Fill the mind with divine thoughts. The others will gradually vanish. Build through regular meditation a strong spiritual fortress and a magnetic aura around you which cannot be penetrated even by the the worst evil.

Your will should be rendered strong, pure and irresistible by more reflection on the Self, eradication of subtle desires, control of the senses and more inner life.

In dream also you should begin to gradually exercise control. You should check the mind when it does an evil act. The force of your spiritual practice done in the wakeful state will come to your aid in the dream. This is a sign of your spiritual growth. Watch your dreams carefully.

What sort of thoughts arise in your mind as soon as you wake up, when you are alone in the room or when you walk in the streets? Are you able to keep up the same state of mind you have during meditation in a closed room when you walk in the street also? Introspect and closely watch your mind. If the mind is perturbed when you walk in the streets you are still weak, you have not advanced in meditation or grown spiritually. Continue the meditation vigorously. (An advanced student will have thoughts of Brahman in his dream.)

Unless you closely observe the mind you will not find that it is running away. Sometimes you will be imagining that you are meditating, but actually the mind will be either building castles in the air or going into the state of half sleep or deep sleep.

In a big city there is much bustle and sound at eight p.m. At nine p.m. there is not so much bustle and sound. At ten p.m. it is still reduced; at eleven p.m. it is much less. At one a.m. there is peace everywhere. Even so, in the beginning of yoga practices there are countless thoughts in the mind. There is much agitation and tossing in the mind. Gradually the thought waves subside. In the end all mental modifications are controlled. The yogi enjoys perfect peace.

When you pass through a market of a big city you will not be able to notice small sounds, but when you sit for common meditation with some of your friends in a quiet room in the morning, you will be able to detect even a little sneezing or coughing. Even so, you are not able to find out the evil thoughts when you are engaged in some work or other, but you are able to detect them when you sit for meditation. Do not be afraid when evil thoughts pass through your mind when you sit for meditation. Do vigorous japa and meditation. They will pass off soon.

Even if the mind runs outside during your practice, do not bother. Allow it to run. Slowly try to bring it to your centre of concentration. By repeated practice the mind will be finally focussed in your heart; in the Atman, the indweller of your heart, the final goal of life. In the beginning the mind may run out eighty times; within six months it may run seventy times; within a year it may run fifty times; within two years it may run thirty times; within five years it will be completely fixed in the divine consciousness. Then it will not run out at all even if you try your level best to bring it out, like the wandering bull which was in the habit of running to gardens of different landlords for eating grass, but which now eats fresh gram and extract of cotton seeds in its own resting place.

The Atman is the fountain source of energy. Thinking on the Atman or the source of energy is also a dynamic method for augmenting energy, strength and power.

Conserve energy by talking little, observing mauna, controlling anger, observing celibacy, practising pranayama and controlling irrelevant and nonsensical thoughts. You will have abundant energy at your disposal by having recourse to the above practices. You can move heaven and earth now.

Abandon ruthlessly all sensual objects. They are the wombs of pain. Gradually develop balance of mind. Subdue the senses. Annihilate lust, anger and greed. Meditate and behold the imperishable Atman. Rest yourself firmly in the Self. Nothing can hurt you now, you have become invincible.

Dive deep into the heart by withdrawing the mind from sensual objects. Kill this illusory little 'I' and know 'I am He' (soham). Just as the drop of water loses its name and form and joins the sea, so also the jiva himself merges in the Supreme Soul and loses his own name and form.

The sight of a beautiful form gives pleasure to the mind. After all, mind wants pleasure. If, by the practice of meditation, the mind is trained to enjoy or taste the bliss of formless Brahman or the Self who is seated in the hearts of all, it will not run to beautiful forms outside.

The mind-wandering will gradually cease through regular meditation. Meditation will remove irritability also and considerably augment peace of mind.

You should know the ways and habits of the mind through daily introspection, self-analysis or self-examination. You should have knowledge of the laws of the mind. Then it will be easy for you to check mind-wandering. When you sit for meditation, when you deliberately attempt to forget the worldly objects, all sorts of worldly thoughts, irrelevant and nonsensical thoughts will crop up in your mind and disturb your meditation. You will be quite astonished. Old thoughts which you entertained several years ago, old memories of past enjoyments, will bubble up and force the mind to wander in all directions. You will find that the trap-door of the vast magazine of thoughts and memories within the subconscious mind is opened, the lid of the store-house of thoughts within is lifted up and the thoughts gush out in a continuous stream. The more you attempt to still them the more they will bubble up with redoubled force and strength.

Be not discouraged. Never despair. Through regular and constant meditation you can purify the subconscious mind and control all thoughts and memories. The fire of meditation will burn all thoughts. Meditation is a potent antidote to annihilate poisonous worldly thoughts. Be assured of this.

During introspection you can clearly observe the shiftings of the mind from one line of thought to another. Herein lies a chance for you to mould the mind properly and direct the thoughts and the mental energy into divine channels. You can re-arrange the thoughts and make new associations on a new pure basis. You can throw out useless worldly thoughts just as you remove the weeds and throw them out. Just as you grow jasmine, roses, lilies and temple flowers in your garden, you should cultivate the flowers of peaceful thoughts of love, mercy, kindness, purity, etc. in the vast garden of your mind. Through introspection you will have to water this garden of the mind with meditation and sublime thinking and remove the weeds of vain, useless discordant thoughts.

A goldsmith converts thirteen carat gold into pure fifteen carat gold by adding acids and burning it several times in the crucible. Even so will you have to purify your sensuous mind through concentration, reflection on the words of the spiritual preceptor and the sentences of the *Upanishads*, japa or silent repetition of the name of the Lord, and meditation.

This is very patient work. This is a stupendous task indeed, but for a yogi of self-determination who has the grace of the Lord and iron will, it is nothing. The practice must be constant. Then only can one attain Self-realisation surely and quickly. He who practises meditation by fits and starts for a few minutes daily will not be able to achieve any tangible results in yoga.

Meditation on the immortal Self will act like dynamite and blow up all thoughts and memories in the subconscious mind. If the thoughts trouble you much, do not suppress them by force. Be a silent witness. They will subside gradually. Then try to root them out through regular silent meditation.

Positive overpowers negative. A positive thought drives off a negative one. Courage drives off fear, love destroys hatred, unity annihilates separateness, magnanimity destroys petty-mindedness (jealousy) and generosity drives away miserliness and greed. Keep yourself always positive and you will have wonderful meditation. When you see the flowers in a mango tree you know pretty well that you will get the mangoes soon. Even so, if you have peace in your mind, be sure that you will get good meditation and the fruit of illumination soon.

All objects seen are nothing but mind only, in form and substance. Mind creates and it destroys. A highly developed mind influences lower minds. Telepathy, mind reading, hypnotism, mesmerism, distant healing and so many allied powers bear testimony to this fact. Mind is undoubtedly the greatest power on earth, and control of that mind bestows all powers.

For meditation you want a properly trained instrument (mind). It should be calm, clear, pure, subtle, sharp, steady and one-pointed. Brahman is pure and subtle and you need a pure and subtle mind to approach Brahman.

The pose or asana is really mental. If the mind is wandering you cannot have a steady body or a steady physical pose. When the mind is steady or fixed in Brahman, steadiness of the body automatically follows.

All actions, whether internal or external, can be done only when the mind is united with the organs. Thought is the real action. If you have control over the mind by steady practice, if you can regulate your emotions and moods, you will not do foolish and wrong actions. Meditation will help a lot in checking various emotions and impulses.

As the first thought is the thought 'I', and as this thought 'I' is at the base of all other thoughts, egoism is the seed for the mind. Mind exists on account of 'I'. 'I' exists on account of mind. 'I' is only an idea in the mind. 'Mind' and 'I' are identical. If 'I' vanishes mind will also vanish, and if mind vanishes 'I' will vanish. Destroy mind through knowledge of Brahman. Destroy the 'I' through the feeling of 'I am Brahman', through constant and intense meditation. When mind vanishes or thoughts cease, name and form will cease to exist and the goal is reached.

The aspirant is very enthusiastic in his sadhana in the beginning. He is full of zeal. He takes a great deal of interest. He expects to get some results or siddhis. When he does not get these results he gets discouraged, loses interest in his practice and slackens his efforts or gives up his sadhana completely. He loses his faith in the efficacy of the sadhana. Sometimes the mind gets disgusted with one particular kind of sadhana and it wants some new kind of sadhana. Just as mind wants some variety in food and other things, so also it wants variety in the mode of sadhana also. It rebels against monotonous practice. The aspirant should know how to coax the mind on such occasions and to extract work from it by a little relaxation of mind. The cessation of sadhana is a grave mistake. Spiritual practices should never be given up under any circumstances. Evil thoughts will be ever waiting to enter the gates of the mental factory. If the aspirant stops his sadhana his mind will be like the devil's workshop. Do not expect anything. Be sincere and regular in your daily routine, tapas and meditation. The sadhana will take care of itself.

The mind is directly or indirectly attached to some pleasing or favourite ideas. If you are enjoying the picturesque scenery in Kashmir your mind will be suddenly upset by shock if you receive a telegram which brings the unhappy tidings of the untimely demise of your only son. The scenery will no longer interest you, it will have lost its charm for you. There is rejection of attention, there is depression. It is concentration and attention that gives you pleasure in sight-seeing.

When you climb the ladder of yoga and when you walk in the spiritual path, do not look back, do not remember your past experiences; kill all memory of your past experiences. Build up your mental feeling of 'I am Brahman' strongly. Strengthen it. Generate again and again the thought that Brahman alone exists. Keep it steady by regular and constant meditation. A single thought of your past experience will give a new lease of life to that thought-image or memory picture, rejuvenate and strengthen it and pull you down. It will be difficult for you to climb up again.

Be concerned with the present only. Do not look back upon the past, or to the future. Then alone will you be happy, free from cares, worries and anxieties. You will have a long life. Your past days of childhood and schooling are all a dream when you are forty. The whole of life is a long dream. The past is a dream to you now. The future also will be the same hereafter. You will have to deal with the present only. You will have to cut down the two wings of the mind-bird, the two wings representing the past and the future. But it will flutter about, as there is the present. Keep away all external impressions. Silence the mind. Restrain the modifications of the mind. Concentrate. Overcome the multiplicity of ideas that result from impressions. Destroy the sankalpas through strenuous efforts. Exercise enquiry and discrimination. Meditate ceaselessly upon that satchidananda Brahman and attain that supreme immaculate seat.

Give now good food for the mind — some sublime thoughts of the *Bhagavad Gita, Avadhuta Gita,* or the meaning of OM* — to reflect upon. After some time the luring present also will vanish. The mind will become perfectly serene and tranquil. The highest knowledge of the Self will dawn in your pure mind. You will rest in Brahman, the source, support, basis and background of everything. You will be established in the knowledge of the Self (sat-chit-ananda). May you prosper gloriously! May you live drowned in Brahman, the ocean of bliss, in an illumined state!

O beloved Ram, you are within a strong spiritual fortress now. No temptation can influence you. You are absolutely safe. You can do vigorous sadhana now without fear. You have a strong spiritual prop to lean upon. Become a brave soldier. Kill your foe, the mind, ruthlessly. Wear the spiritual laurels of peace, equal vision, contentment. Your face is already shining with Brahmic bliss. The all-merciful Lord has given you all sorts of comforts, good health and a guru to guide you. What more do you want? Grow, evolve, realise the Truth and proclaim it everywhere.

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* See chapter on OM

Qualifications for Practising Meditation

Before saturating the mind with thoughts of Brahman you will have to assimilate the divine ideas first. Assimilation first and then saturation. Then comes realisation at once, without a moment's delay. Remember this triplet always — assimilation, saturation, realisation.

Your will should be rendered strong, pure and irresistible by more remembrance of God, eradication of desires, control of the senses and more intense inner life. You must utilise every second on Sundays and holidays to your best spiritual advantage.

If you have tasted rasagulla (a Bengal sweetmeat) for a month, mental adhesion to rasagulla comes in the mind. If you are in the company of sannyasins (monks), if you read books on yoga, vedanta, etc., a similar mental adhesion takes place in the mind for attaining God-consciousness. Mere mental adhesion, though, will not help you much. Burning dispassion (vairagya), a burning desire for liberation (mumukshutva), capacity for spiritual practice, intense and constant application and deep meditation are needed. Then only Self-knowledge is possible.

Energy is wasted in useless thinking. Conserve mental energy by driving out useless, obnoxious thoughts. Then you will improve in your meditation.

Just as water when it leaks into rat-holes instead of running into the proper channels in agricultural fields, becomes wasted and does not help the growth of plants, fruit-bearing trees, grains, etc., so also the efforts of an aspirant in meditation become a wastage if he has not the virtue of dispassion. He gets no progress in meditation.

Semen or vital force tones the nerves and brain and energises the system. He who has preserved his vital force by the vow of celibacy and sublimated it into ojas shakti (spiritual energy) can practise steady meditation for a long period. Only he can ascend the ladder of yoga. Without brahmacharya no iota of spiritual progress is possible. Brahmacharya is the very foundation on which the superstructure of meditation and samadhi can be built up. Many people waste this vital energy — a great spiritual treasure indeed — when they become blind and lose their power of reason under excitement. Pitiable indeed is their lot! They cannot make any substantial progress in yoga.

You will be able to enter into deep meditation only if you lead a moral life. When you have led a moral life you may try further to build up discrimination and the other steps in your mind. You can cultivate mind in concentration and can finally devote yourself to meditation. The more you lead the moral life, the more you meditate, the greater likelihood will there be for you to enter into nirvikalpa samadhi, which alone can liberate you from the round of births and deaths and confer on you eternal bliss and immortality.

Leading a virtuous life is not by itself sufficient for God-realisation. Constant meditation is absolutely necessary. A good virtuous life only prepares the mind as a fit instrument for concentration and meditation. It is concentration and meditation that eventually lead to Self-realisation.

The student of yoga should not possess wealth as it will drag him to worldly temptations. He can keep a little sum to meet the wants of the body. Economical independence will relieve the mind from anxieties and will enable him to continue the sadhana without interruption.

You must have a pure mind if you want to realise the Self. Unless the mind is set free and casts away all desires, cravings, worries, delusion, pride, lust, attachment, likes and dislikes, it cannot enter into the domain of supreme peace and unalloyed felicity — the immortal abode.

You cannot enjoy peace of mind or practise meditation if there is tossing of the mind. Desires and tossing of the mind co-exist. If you realy want to destroy the latter you must destroy all mundane desires and cravings through dispassion and self-surrender to the Lord.

If you apply fire to green wood it will not burn; if you apply fire to a piece of dried wood it will at once catch fire and burn. Even so, those who have not purified their minds will not be able to start the fire of meditation. They will be sleeping or dreaming — building castles in the air — when they sit for meditation. But those who have removed the impurities of their minds by japa, service, charity, pranayama, etc., will enter into deep meditation as soon as they sit for meditation. The pure ripe mind will at once burn with the fire of meditation.

Mind is compared to a garden. Just as you can cultivate good flowers and fruits in a garden by ploughing and manuring the land, by removing the weeds and thorns and by watering the plants and trees, so also you can cultivate the flower of devotion in the garden of your mind by removing the impurities of the mind (such as lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, etc.) and watering it with divine thoughts. Weeds and thorns grow in the rainy season and disappear in summer, but their seeds remain underneath the ground. As soon as there is a shower the seeds again germinate and sprout. Even so, the modifications of the mind manifest on the surface of the conscious mind, then disappear and assume a subtle seed-state in the form of samskaras or impressions. The samskaras again come to the surface of the mind either through internal or external stimuli. When the garden is clean, when there are no weeds and thorns, you can get good fruits. So also, when the mind is pure, when it is free from lust, anger, etc. you can have the fruit of good deep meditation. Therefore cleanse the mind of its impurities first. Then the current of meditation will flow by itself.

If you want to keep a garden always clean, you will have to remove not only the weeds and thorns and other small plants, but also the seeds that lie underneath the ground, which again and again germinate during the rainy season. Even so, you will have to destroy not only the big waves or modifications of the mind but also the impressions or tendencies which are the seeds for births and deaths and which generate the thoughts again and again, if you want to enter into samadhi and attain liberation or perfect freedom.

The aspirant who wants to attain samadhi should have patience like that of the bird Tittibha, which tried to empty the ocean with its beak. Once he makes a firm resolve, gods will come to his help in the same way that Garuda came to the help of Tittibha. Help invariably comes from all beings in a righteous act. Even the monkeys and squirrels helped Rama to rescue Sita. He who is endowed with self-control, courage, prowess, fortitude, patience, perseverance, strength and skill can achieve anything. You should never give up your attempt even if you face insurmountable difficulties.

Requisites

The following are indispensable if you want to practise vigorous meditation and attain samadhi or Self-realisation quickly.

(a) There must be mauna and solitude in a cool place.
(b) There must be capacity for spiritual practice.
(c) There must be good, pure, substantial, light, nutritious food.
(d) There must be a good spiritual teacher to guide you.
(e) There must be good books for study.
(f) There must be burning dispassion, longing for liberation and strong discrimination in you.
(g) You must have a sharp, subtle, calm and one-pointed intellect to understand the reality of Brahman. Then, and then only, is realisation possible.

Many do not get the above favourable conditions for spiritual practice. That is the reason why they do not make any spiritual progress. For purposes of meditation everything is to be rendered pure (sattvic). The place of meditation must be pure, the food must be pure, the wearing apparel must be pure, the company must be pure, talking must be pure, the sounds that you hear must be pure, thinking must be pure, study must be pure. Then only is good progress possible, particularly in the case of beginners (neophytes).

This body is an instrument for attaining God-realisation. God-realisation is not possible without spiritual practice. Spiritual practice is not possible without good health. A sickly, dilapidated body stands in the way of practise of discipline. If you do not possess good health you cannot do any rigorous yoga practice and meditation.

Just as clouds screen and obstruct the sun, so also the cloud of sickness stands in your way. Even then you must not leave the practice of japa, concentration and meditation. These small clouds of sickness will pass off soon. Give the suggestion to the mind: 'Even this will pass away'. Just as you do not leave your food even for a day, so also you should not leave your spiritual practice even for a day. The mind is ever ready to deceive you and stop you from the practice of meditation. Do not hear the voice of the mind. Hear the sweet voice of the soul.

The aspirant should try his level best to always keep good health by regular exercise, asana, pranayama, walking and running in open air; moderation in diet; regularity in his work, meals, sleep, etc. He should avoid drugs as much as possible. He must take recourse to nature-cure such as fresh air, wholesome food, cold bath and dietetic adjustment. He should always keep a cheerful attitude of mind under all conditions of life. Cheerfulness is a powerful mental tonic. There is intimate connection between body and mind. If one is cheerful the body is also healthy. That is the reason why doctors now prescribe laughing three times daily in the treatment of diseases.

Some foolish aspirants refuse to take medicine when they are ailing seriously. They say; "It is our fate. We should not go against fate. Taking medicine is against the will of God. The body is illusory. It is insentient. If I take medicine, it will increase the body-idea." This is foolish philosophy. Take medicine. Try hard. Leave the results to karma. This is wisdom. These foolish people unnecessarily torture the body, allow the disease to strike deep root and spoil their health. They cannot do any sadhana. They ruin this instrument by a wrong conception of vedanta. Vedanta says: "Have no attachment for this body, but keep it clean, strong and healthy for constant, rigid sadhana. The body is a boat to cross to the other shore of immortality. It is a horse to take you to the destination. Feed the horse well — but give up 'mine-ness'." Tell me friend, which is better? To take a purgative, to take some medicine for a couple of days, to tide over difficulties in a few days and to again start sadhana quickly, or to neglect the disease, not to take any medicine, to allow the disease to assume a grave form, to suffer for a month or two by negligence, to make the disease chronic and incurable and to allow the practice to suffer for a month?

HINTS ON MEDITATION

When you are a neophyte in meditation, start repeating some sublime hymns for ten minutes as soon as you sit for meditation. This will elevate the mind. The mind can be easily withdrawn from worldly objects. Then stop this kind of thinking also and fix the mind on one idea only, by repeated and strenuous efforts. Then meditation will ensue.

You must have a mental image of God or Brahman (concrete or abstract) before you begin to meditate.

When you start a fire you heap up some straw, pieces of paper and thin pieces of wood. The fire gets extinguished. You blow it again several times through the mouth or the blow-pipe. After some time it becomes a small conflagration. You can hardly extinguish it now even with great effort. Even so, in the beginning of meditation beginners fall down from meditation into their old grooves. They will have to lift their mind up again and again and fix it on the object of meditation. When meditation becomes very deep and steady they eventually get established in God. Then meditation becomes natural and habitual. Use the blow-pipe of intense dispassion and intense practice to kindle the fire of meditation.

Just as the student creates interest in his study of mathematics or geometry (although it is disgusting in the beginning) by imagining the advantages that he will gain by passing the examination, so also you will have to create interest in meditation by thinking of the incalculable benefits of immortality, supreme peace and infinite bliss that will be derived by its constant practice.

Clarify your ideas again and again. Think clearly. Have deep concentration and right thinking. Introspect in solitude. Purify your thoughts to a considerable degree. Still the thoughts and silence the bubbling mind. Just as in a surgical clinic the assistant surgeon allows only one patient at a time to enter the consultation room or the operation theatre, so also you will have to allow one thought-wave only to rise in the mind and to settle down calmly. Then allow another thought to enter. Drive off all extraneous thoughts that have nothing to do with the subject matter on hand. An efficient control over thoughts through long practice is a great help in meditation.

Watch every thought very carefully. Shut out all useless thoughts from the mind. Your life must tally with your meditation. Keep up your meditation during work also. Do not give new strength to evil thoughts by constant thinking of them. Restrain them. Substitute sublime thoughts. Control of thought is absolutely necessary. You should not waste even a single thought.

Do not store needless information in your brain. Learn to unmind the mind. Forget whatever you have learnt, it is useless to you now. Then only can you fill your mind with divine thoughts in meditation. You will gain fresh mental strength now.

Mind your own daily business. The fruit will come by itself. Let me repeat here the words of Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "*Your business is with the action (austerity, practice and meditation) only, never with its fruits; so let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor be attached to inaction.*" Your efforts will be crowned with sanguine success by the Lord. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and getting a one-pointed mind. Be cool and patient. Continue your sadhana regularly.

Be careful in the selection of your companions. Undesirable persons easily shake your faith and belief. Have full faith in your spiritual preceptor and the spiritual practice which you are pursuing. Never allow your own convictions to be changed. Continue with zeal and enthusiasm. You will have quick spiritual progress and you will ascend the spiritual ladder step by step and ultimately reach the goal.

Do not plan, do not imagine, do not try to fulfil desires. Be indifferent. Annihilate emotion. Do not be attached to desires. Desires are powerless in the absence of emotions and attachment. They dwindle and die. Find out the causes of disturbing thoughts and remove them one by one. Watch the mind carefully. Dwell in solitude, do not mix. Have patience, enthusiasm and courage. If you find great interest and happiness in meditation and if you are progressing, stop study also for some time. Study also is an object of enjoyment. God is not in books. He can be reached only by constant meditation. Erudition is to gain applause in society. Avoid pedantry.

Sometimes the mind feels tired. Then take complete rest. Do not strain the mind. Go for an evening stroll along the sea-shore, along the banks of Ganges or any other delightful road. Chant OM. Feel OM. Hum OM. Reduce the period of meditation for a couple of days. Use your strong common-sense and listen to the voice from within. Observe the moods of the mind. The two currents of joy and grief are moving in the mind. When you are depressed, go for a good walk. Close the books. Remember that these are all characteristics of superimposition and they do not belong to the thing itself — the Atman. They will pass away quickly.

When you meditate, disregard the substratum awakenings in the mind that arise out of the senses. Avoid carefully the comparisons with all other cross-references and memories of ideas. Concentrate the whole energy of the mind on the one idea of God or Atman Itself without comparison with any other idea. Whenever the mind wanders you should check it. Try to identify yourself with the eternal, immortal, ever-pure Atman that resides in the chambers of your heart. Think and feel always: "I am the ever-pure Atman." This one thought will remove all troubles and fanciful thoughts. The mind wants to delude you. Start this anticurrent of thought. The mind will lurk like a thief.

You can get the meditative mood quite easily without effort if you do your practice at fixed hours, both morning and night. In winter you can have four sittings. You should have the same pose, the same room, the same seat, the same mental attitude and the same hours for meditation. Everybody should have his daily routine and should strictly adhere to it at all costs. Leniency to the mind will upset the whole programme. You should meditate regularly and do spiritual practice untiringly with indefatigable energy, dogged patience, adamantine will and iron determination. Then only sure success is possible.

Meals should be taken at regular hours. One should go to sleep at a fixed time and get up at a fixed time. See how the sun is very regular in its rising and daily work!

A glutton or a sensualist, a dullard or a lazy man cannot practise meditation. He who has controlled the tongue and other organs, who has acumen, who eats, drinks and sleeps in moderation, who has destroyed selfishness, lust, greed and anger, can practise meditation and attain success in samadhi.

What does a passionate man do? He repeats the same old ignominious act again and again and fills his stomach as many times as he can. What does an aspirant with burning desire for Self-realisation do? He takes a little milk and repeats the process of meditation again and again the whole day and night and enjoys the eternal bliss of the Self. Both are busy in their own way. The former is caught up in the wheel of births and deaths and the latter attains immortality.

Just as you require food for the body, so also you require food for the soul in the shape of prayers, japa, kirtan, meditation, etc. Just as you are agitated when you do not get food in time, so also will you be agitated when you do not pray in the morning and evening at the proper time if you keep up the practice of prayer and japa for some time. The soul also wants its food at the proper time. The food for the soul is more essential than the food for the body.

Whatever spiritual practice you do — either japa, practice of asana, concrete meditation on a form of the Lord or pranayama — do it systematically and regularly every day. The reward is immense.

Just as you take food four times — morning, noon, afternoon and night — so also you will have to meditate four times a day if you want to realise quickly.

If interruption comes in your practice, make up the deficiency in the evening or at night or on the following morning. Rapid progress and great success can be attained if regularity is observed by the practitioner. Even if you do not realise any tangible result in the practice you must plod on with sincerity, earnestness, patience and perseverance. You will get success after some time. There is no doubt of this.

Fill the mind again and again with pure, divine thoughts. New grooves and avenues will be formed now. Just as a gramophone needle cuts a small groove in the plate, pure thinking will cut new healthy grooves in the mind and brain. New impressions will be formed.

The period of meditation should be gradually increased with caution. The meditation should not be by fits and starts. It should be well-regulated and steady. You must always use your commonsense and reason all throughout your practice. You should ascend the summit of yoga gradually, slowly, stage by stage, step by step. You must not give up the practice even for a few days.

Just as you saturate salt or sugar with the water, you will have to saturate the mind with thoughts of God, with sublime soul-awakening spiritual thoughts. Then only will you be always established in the divine consciousness.

If you keep lemon juice or tamarind juice in a golden cup it is not spoiled or tainted, but if you keep it in a brass or copper vessel it is at once spoiled and rendered poisonous. Even so if there are some sensual thoughts in the pure mind of a person who practises constant meditation they will not pollute the mind and induce passionate excitement, but if there are sensual thoughts in persons with impure minds these sensual thoughts will cause excitement in them when they come across sensual objects.

Just as you render turbid water pure by the addition of clearing nut (strychnos potatorum), so also will you have to purify the turbid mind filled with desires and false ideas, by thinking and reflecting on the Absolute. Then only will there be true illumination.

You must not be too hasty in longing for the fruits at once when you take to meditation. A young lady perambulated the asvattha tree (ficus religiosa) one hundred and eight times for getting a baby, and then immediately touched her abdomen to see whether there was a child or not. It is simply foolishness. She will have to wait for some months. Even so, if you will meditate for some time regularly, then the mind will be ripened and eventually you will get Self-realisation. Haste makes waste.

During meditation, note how long you can shut out all worldly thoughts. Watch your mind. If it is for twenty minutes, try to increase the period to thirty minutes, and so on. Fill the mind with thoughts of God again and again.

In meditation do not strain your eyes. Do not strain the brain. Do not struggle or wrestle with the mind. Relax. Gently allow divine thoughts to flow. Steadily think of the object of meditation. Do not voluntarily and violently drive away intruding thoughts. Have sublime pure thoughts. The vicious thoughts will vanish by themselves.

If there is much strain in your meditation, reduce the duration of each sitting for a few days. Do light meditation only. When you have regained the normal tone, again increase the period. Use your common sense throughout your sadhana. I again reiterate this point.

When you go in for seclusion for intense tapas or when you practice intense meditation in a quiet room, do not bother much about your shaving. Let the hairs grow. These mechanical thoughts such as thoughts of shaving, etc., will produce great distraction in your mind, and interfere with the continuity of divine thoughts. Do not think much of the body, bread, clothing, etc. Think more of God or Atman.

If you are a very busy man and if you always lead a travelling life, you need not have a special room and a special time for meditation. Do japa of 'soham' and meditation along with the breath — this is very easy — or associate your mantra also with the breath. Then every movement of breath will become a prayer and meditation. Remember God and feel His presence everywhere. This will suffice.

Why do you close your eyes during meditation? Open your eyes and meditate. You must keep your balance of mind even when you are in the bustle of a city. Then only are you perfect. In the beginning when you are a neophyte you can close your eyes to remove the distraction of mind, as you are very weak. But later on you must meditate with eyes open even during walking. Think strongly that the world is unreal, that there is no world, that there is the Atman only. If you can meditate on the Atman even when the eyes are open, you will be a strong man, you will not be easily disturbed.

You can meditate only when the mind is beyond all anxieties.

All vrittis (mental modifications) such as anger, jealousy, hatred, etc., assume subtle forms when you practise japa and meditation and they are thinned out. They should be completely destroyed through samadhi. Then only are you safe. Latent vrittis will be waiting for opportunities to assume a grave and expanded form. You should be ever careful and vigilant.

Resist the fatal downward pull by the dark, antagonistic forces through regular meditation. Check the aimless wanderings of the mind through clear and orderly thinking. Hear not the false whispers of the lower mind. Turn your inner gaze to the divine centre. Do not be afraid of the severe set-backs that you will encounter on your journey. Be brave. March on boldly till you finally rest in your centre of eternal bliss.

You must daily increase your dispassion, meditation and sattvic virtues such as patience, perseverance, mercy, love, forgiveness, purity, etc. These help meditation. Meditation increases the pure qualities.

Have the one all-pervading feeling of God. Try to keep up the feeling always. Deny the finite body as a mere appearance.

When you put a piece of iron rod in the blazing furnace it becomes red like fire. When you remove it, it loses its red colour. If you want to keep it always red you must always keep it in fire. So also if you want to keep the mind charged with the fire of wisdom you must keep it always in contact or in touch with God through constant and intense meditation. You must keep up an unceasing flow of God-consciousness.

Just as cannabis, indigo, opium or alcohol give you intoxication which lasts for some hours even if you take a small quantity, so also the God-intoxication that you get from regular meditation lasts for some hours if you meditate for half an hour daily. Therefore, be regular in your meditation.

Those who meditate for four or five hours at a stretch can have two meditative poses. Sometimes blood accumulates in some part of the legs or thighs and so gives a little trouble. After two hours change the pose, or stretch the legs at full length and lean against a wall or pillow. Keep the spine erect. This is the most comfortable asana. Or you can join two chairs, sit in one chair and stretch the legs on another chair. This is another contrivance.

Some students like to meditate with open eyes, others with closed eyes, while some others with half-opened eyes. If you meditate with closed eyes, dust or foreign particles will not fall in your eyes. Some students who are troubled by lights and jerks prefer meditation with open eyes. Within a short time sleep overpowers some who meditate with closed eyes. If the eyes are kept open the mind wanders to objects. Use your commonsense and adopt that which suits you best. Overcome other obstacles by suitable intelligent methods.

Meditation is possible when the mind is full of peace. The stomach should not be loaded. There is an intimate connection between the mind and the food. A heavy meal is harmful. Take a full meal at eleven a.m. and half a seer of milk at night. The evening meal should be light for those who meditate.

Meditate for two or three hours. If you get tired, take rest for half an hour. Take a cup of milk and then again sit for meditation. Repeat the process of meditation again and again. You can have a stroll on the verandah in the evening. Do not allow the mind to entertain any worldly thought even for a few minutes. This method will keep the mind very very busy and entrap it within a short period. Practise this. You can enter into samadhi within forty days. Householders can convert a room into a forest and can achieve this end at their very threshold. You will be able to sit continuously even for fourteen hours at a stretch after some practise. Padmasana is good for householders. Siddhasana is good for sannyasins.

If you wish to attain success in yoga you will have to abandon all worldly enjoyments and practise austerity and celibacy. These will help you in the attainment of concentration and samadhi.

If you are not able to form the image of your chosen deity or fix the mind on it you may try to hear the sound of the mantra repeated by you or think of the letters of the mantra in order. This will stop mind-wandering.

Prana is the overcoat for the mind. The vibration of the subtle psychic prana gives rise to the formation of thought. By pranayama you can improve your meditation by making the mind more steady.

If you place a big mirror in front of a dog and keep some bread in front of it, the dog at once barks at its own reflection in the mirror. It foolishly imagines that there is another dog. Even so, through his mind-mirror man sees his own reflection only in all people, but foolishly imagines, like the dog, that they are all different from him, and he fights on account of hatred and jealousy.

It is the actions of the mind that are truly termed karmas. True liberation results from the disenthronement of the mind. Those who have freed themselves from the fluctuations of their minds have supreme steadfastness in meditation. Should the mind be purged of all its impurities, then it will become very calm and all worldly delusion with its attendant births and deaths will be soon destroyed.

Meditate on the idea: 'There is no world. There is neither body nor the mind. There is only one pure Consciousness. I am that pure Consciousness.' This is nirguna meditation (meditation without attributes).

You will have to make the thought of God or the divine presence flow like an inundation or flood. Renounce the thoughts of objects. Drive them away with the whip of discrimination and enquiry into the nature of the Self. There is struggle in the beginning, it is trying indeed, but later on as you grow stronger and stronger and as you grow in purity and contemplation of God, spiritual practice becomes easy. You rejoice in the life of unity and get strength from the Atman. Inner strength grows when all the sensual ideas are thinned out and the mind becomes one-pointed.

Try to identify yourself with the eternal, immortal, ever-pure Atman that resides in the chambers of your heart. Think and feel always: 'I am the ever pure Atman'. This one thought will remove all troubles and fanciful thoughts.

Places for Meditation

"*One should perform his yogic meditation and concentration on a level place, free from pebbles, fire, wind, dust, dampness and disturbing noises, where the scenery is charming and pleasing to the eyes and where there are bowers, caves and good water-places which help the practice of concentration.*"
Svetashvatara Upanishad (II-10)

Solitude and intense meditation are two important requisites for Self-realisation. The banks of rivers, mountain scenery, lovely flower gardens and sacred temples are the places which elevate the mind in concentration and meditation. Have recourse to them.

The world will not suit you for meditation when you advance in the spiritual path. There are many disturbing causes. The environment is not elevating. Your friends are your worst enemies as they take away all your time through vain talk. It is inevitable. You are puzzled and worried, and then you try to get out of that environment.

The place you choose must have a temperate climate and must suit you during summer, rainy season and winter. You must stick to one place for three years with firm determination. As all places combine some advantages and disadvantages, you will have to select that place which has more advantages and less disadvantages.

Everything is relative in this world. Even if you wander from pole to pole you can hardly get an ideal place that can satisfy you from all view-points. You will have to create your own spiritual atmosphere through japa, meditation and prayer. To get an ideal place is an impossibility. You must not shift when you get some inconvenience. You must put up with it. There is no benefit in frequent wanderings. Do not compare one place with another. The world tempts you in various ways. Use your discrimination and reason. Mussoorie will appear to you most charming when you are at Simla. Simla will appear more delightful when you are at Mussoorie. Do not believe the mind and senses any more. Enough, enough of their tricks. Be on the watch to guard yourself from sense deceptions and temptations.

Rishikesh and Muni-Ki-Reti are wonderful places for meditation. Their charm and spiritual influence are simply marvellous. You can put up your cottage there. Uttarkashi, Brahmapuri, Garuda Chetty and Nilakanth near Rishikesh are other nice places. Almora and Nainital are also good. Any village on the bank of a river, e.g., the Ganges, Narmada or Jumuna, is beautiful. Kulu Valley, Champa Valley and Kashmir are quite suitable.

Select any place that has an even climate. Cool places are needed for meditation. The brain gets tired very soon in a hot place. In a cool place you can meditate all the twentyfour hours. You will not feel exhaustion. Winter and the early part of spring are the best seasons for beginners to commence meditation. In winter the mind is not tired at all. You can meditate for even twentyfour hours without the least exhaustion.

Important Places for Meditation

1. Rishikesh (Himalayas)
2. Hardwar
3. Uttarkasi (via Tehri)
4. Kankhal (near Hardwar)
5. Badri Narayan (Himalayas)
6. Devaprayag (Himalayas)
7. Gangotri (Himalayas)
8. Ayodhya
9. Mount Abu
10. Nasik
11. Benares
12. Brindavan
13. Srinagar (Kashmir)

14. Almora
15. Nainital
16. Bangalore
17. Puri
18. Dwaraka
19. Phandarpur
20. Tiruvottiyur (Madras)
21. Alandi (near Poona)
22. Juhu (Bombay)
23. Tiruvengoi Hills
24. Tirupathi Hills
25. Papanasam (Tinnevelly Dt.)

Of all the places, Rishikesh is the best place in the world. The spiritual vibrations are soul-elevating. The scenery is highly charming. It is a beauty-spot.

Mussoorie, Darjeeling, Simla, Ooty, Kodaikanal and all hill-stations are cool places. They have beautiful scenery also, but they are worldly centres and have no elevating spiritual vibrations. Many people go there for enjoyment and taint the atmosphere, hence they are not suitable for meditation.

In the beginning you must have some conveniences also —such as a library, medical aid and a railway station — and you must be able to get some fruits and milk, otherwise it is difficult to continue your spiritual practice in one place for a long time. When you are advanced and you go above body-consciousness you can remain in any place.

An aspirant who meditates in a solitary upstairs room in a town will have as much quiet there as in a forest, but he will not have congenial spiritual vibrations. Vibrations play a vital part in the elevation of the mind and in producing one-pointedness of mind. In holy places the vibrations of saints are lodged in the ethereal space and aspirants are highly benefited by these vibrations. Pure feelings, renunciation and the meditative mood come by themselves without any effort or struggle whatsoever. Once some ladies got down from the train in the Rishikesh station. The moment they saw the Himalayas, they uttered: "Who is a son? Who is a father? Everything is illusion. Everything is false!" Such is the powerful influence of vibrations on the mind. It is only sages and yogis who can know at once the nature of vibrations of a place for meditation.

Cave life is extremely good. The ancient sages and seers of India lived in the caves of the Himalayas and did rigorous tapas (austerity). The temperature is quite even in caves. The heat of scorching summer cannot penetrate inside and they are quite warm in winter. As all external sounds are shut out in a cave you can have very beautiful uninterrupted meditation. There is solitude in caves, the spiritual currents are elevating and there is no mundane atmosphere because modern civilisation has not penetrated there. Such are the advantages of cave-life.

However, cave life is not suitable for aspirants who have modern education and a delicate constitution, and who are timid. It is meant for aspirants who have a strong sturdy frame, who are fearless and who have intense power of endurance. Those who have some divine psychic powers; who have a good knowledge of Himalayan herbs; who have strengthened the body by means of special tonic; who have a body which is proof against bites of poisonous insects or creatures; who have psychic powers conferred by special mantras; who have control over wild animals; who can bear heat and cold, hunger and thirst; who have lost all interest in the attractions of the world, sense-objects and work of any kind; who can meditate for a long time and who have internal dispassion, can remain in a cave.

Some raw young aspirants with weak body and indifferent health, in whom a ray of discrimination and dispassion has recently dawned through study of some religious books or some mishap or difficulties in life, run to the Himalayan caves without any previous preparation or bodily and mental discipline. Just as the mercury in the thermometer runs to one hundred and six degrees in high fevers, so also juvenile bubbling emotions run to one hundred and six degrees to the crown of the head. It cools down quickly. They find it difficult to cope there, and leave the place in a few days. For some, cave life is not suitable. They develop some sort of skin diseases and pale-bloodedness owing to lack of ventilation.

There is another disadvantage in cave life. He who lives in a cave for a long time becomes dull and lazy. He is unable to do any kind of work. He cannot mix with people and is terribly afraid of a multitude of people. His mind soon gets distracted if he is in the company of a few persons, or if he hears a little noise. This is not a balanced life, this is one-sided development. He who dwells in a cave must be able to keep his balance even when he comes to a busy town. This is the sign of his spiritual growth.

Artificial caves with good ventilation can be built underneath the ground in any solitary place, even in your own compound or village. Two walls with a hollow in the middle and pipes to bring in cool air and take away hot air, will keep the cave quite cool. All real aspirants who remain in the world should build one for their meditation. They will be immensely benefited.

The real snug, well-furnished, marvellous, awe-inspiring cave is in the heart. Even now, modern saints and sages abide there, withdrawing the outgoing senses and mind. They drink the nectar of immortality there, and remain ever-blissful.

May you all dwell in this mysterious, magnificent cave in the heart, alone in communion with your inner Self — the secondless Brahman or the Absolute, the goal, the sole refuge of all!

Seclusion and Meditation

Ekanath, Rajah Janaka and others realised God by doing spiritual practices (sadhana) while remaining in the world. The central teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita* is to realise in and through the world. This is plausible and sounds alright, but it is not feasible for the vast majority. It is easier said than done. How many Janakas and Ekanaths have there been? These people had done their sadhana in their last birth — it is absolutely impossible for the vast majority.

Lord Jesus was missing for eighteen years. Buddha went into seclusion for eight years in Uruvala forest. Swami Rama Tirtha was a recluse in Brahmapuri forest for two years. Sri Aurobindo taught that one should realise amidst activity, but he shut himself up in a closed room for twenty years. Many have taken up seclusion during their sadhana period. You can make a beginning in the world but when you have made some progress you must shift yourself for advanced practices to a suitable place where you will find spiritual vibrations and solitude.

As the will-power in many persons has become very weak because they had no religious discipline or training in schools and colleges when they were young, and because they are under the sway of materialistic influences, it is necessary for them to go in for seclusion for some weeks, months or years to practise rigorous japa and undisturbed meditation. There is no magical pill more efficacious than solitude to reduce the disease of tossing of mind caused by reactions of impure impressions.

Those who have fixed up their sons in life and who have retired from service, and those who have no ties or attachment in the world, can remain in seclusion for four or five years and practise intense meditation and austerity for purification and Self-realisation. This is like entering a university for higher studies or a post-graduate course. When the austerity (tapas) is over, when they have attained Self-knowledge, they should come out and share their knowledge and bliss with others. They should disseminate knowledge of the Self through lectures, conversations, discourses or heart-to-heart talks, according to their capacity and disposition.

A householder with yogic tendencies and spiritual inclinations can practise meditation in a solitary and quiet room in his own house or in any solitary place on the banks of any holy river during holidays, or throughout the year if he is a whole-time aspirant or if he is retired from service.

If you want to retire into solitude for the practice of meditation, if you are a householder with spiritual thirsting for intense sadhana, you cannot all of a sudden sever your connection with your family-people. Sudden severance from worldly ties and possessions will give you intense mental agony and induce shock to your family-people. You will have to break the ties gradually. Stay for a week or a month in seclusion to begin with. Then gradually prolong the period. Then they will not feel the pangs of separation.

The aspirant should be free from hope, desire and greed, then only will he have a steady mind. Hope, desire and greed make the mind ever restless and turbulent, they are the enemies of peace and Self-knowledge. He should not have many possessions either, and can keep only those articles which are absolutely necessary for the maintenance of his body. If there are many possessions the mind will be ever thinking of the articles and attempting to protect them. Those who want quick progress in meditation during seclusion should not keep any connection with the world by way of correspondence, reading newspapers or thinking of the family-members and possessions.

He who has reduced his wants; to whom the world has no attraction; who has discrimination, dispassion and burning yearning for liberation and who has observed mauna for months together will be able to live in seclusion.

The aspirant should possess serenity. The divine light can descend only in a serene mind. Serenity is attained by the eradication of desires and cravings. He should be fearless also. This is the most important qualification. A timid or cowardly aspirant is very far from Self-realisation.

The aspirant need not bother about his bodily wants. Everything is provided for by God. Everything is pre-arranged by Mother Nature. She looks after the bodily wants of all very carefully in a more efficient manner than they themselves would do, and knows in a better manner what the requirements are and provides them then and there. Understand the mysterious ways of Mother Nature and become wise. Be grateful to Her for Her unique kindness, grace and mercy.

How can sense-control be tested in a lonely forest where there are no temptations? The yoga students of the caves (seclusion) should test themselves after growing sufficiently, by entering the plains. But they should not test themselves every now and then like the man who removed the young plant daily after watering to see if it had struck deep roots or not!

If you are well established in the practice of withdrawal of the senses, if you have the senses under your full control, you can find perfect solitude and peace even in the most crowded and noisy places of a big city. If the senses are turbulent, if you have not got the power to withdraw the senses, you will have no peace of mind even in a solitary cave in the Himalayas. A disciplined yogi who has controlled his senses and the mind can enjoy peace of mind in a solitary cave. A passionate man who has not controlled the senses and the mind will be only building castles in the aīr if he lives in a solitary cave in the mountains.

Meditation Room

Have a separate meditation room under lock and key. This is esential. Convert a room into a forest. Do not allow anybody to enter the room. Keep it holy. If you cannot afford to have a separate room, convert a small corner of the room as a meditation room with screens or curtains. Burn incense or scented sticks and camphor, in the morning and evening. Keep a photo of Lord Krishna, Siva, Rama, Devi, Gayatri or your guru or Lord Jesus or Lord Buddha. Place your seat in front of the picture. Keep some books such as *Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavatam, Upanishads, Vivekachudamani, Yogavasishtha, Brahmasutras, Bible, Zend Avesta, Koran*, etc. in the room.

Decorate the room with inspiring pictures of great saints, sages, prophets and world-teachers. Take a bath before you enter the room — or wash your face, hands and legs. Sit in the asana in front of the deity. Sing devotional hymns or repeat guru stotras. Then take to the practice of japa, concentration and meditation.

When you repeat the mantra or the name of the Lord the powerful vibrations will be lodged in the ether of the room. In six months' time you will feel peace and purity in the atmosphere of the room. Whenever your mind is much disturbed by worldly influences, sit there and repeat the name of the Lord for half an hour; you will find an entire change in the mind immediately. Practise and feel the soothing spiritual influence yourself. Nothing is like spiritual sadhana. You will find a local Rishikesh in your own house.

The meditation room should be regarded as a temple of God. Talks of profane nature should never be indulged in there. No vicious thoughts of rancorous jealousy or avarice are to be entertained there. Admittance should ever be sought in it with a pious and reverent mind, for what we do, what we think and what we speak of leave their impressions on the ether of the room. If no care is taken to avoid the negative ones they will exert their influence on the aspirant's mind and, rendering his mind perverse and restive, make him incapable of attending to his devotion. The words uttered, the thoughts cherished, the deeds done are not lost; they are always reflected on the subtle layers of ether encircling the room and invariably affect the mind. As much effort as possible should be made to overcome them. This is to be done for a few months only. When the habit is changed, everything will be all right.

Best Time for Meditation

Brahmamuhurta is the morning period from 3.30 to 5.30. It is very favourable for meditation. The mind is quite refreshed after good sleep and is quite calm and serene. There is a preponderance of purity in the mind at this time. In the atmosphere also, purity predominates at this period.

The mind is like a blank sheet of paper or a clean tablet and comparatively free from worldly impressions at this period. The currents of like and dislike have not yet deeply entered the mind. The mind can be moulded very easily at this period in any way you like. You can change it easily with divine thoughts.

All the yogis, paramahamsas, sannyasins, aspirants and the sages of the Himalayas start their meditation at this period and send their vibrations throughout the world. You will be immensely benefited by their spiritual currents. Meditation will come by itself without any effort. It is a terrible spiritual loss for you if you do not utilise this period in divine contemplation and if you snore at this time.

O man, it is brahmamuhurta now! Do not snore or roll in the bed. Throw away the blanket. Get up, start your meditation vigorously, and enjoy the eternal bliss of the inner Self!

In the winter it is not necessary that you should take a cold bath. A mental bath will suffice. Imagine and feel, "I am taking a bath now in the sacred Triveni at Prayag or Manikarnika at Benares." Remember the pure Atman. Repeat the formula, 'I am the ever-pure soul'. This is the most powerful wisdom-bath. This is highly purifying and it burns all sins. Answer the calls of nature quickly, clean the teeth quickly, do not waste much time. Wash the face, hands and feet quickly. Dash cold water on the face and top of the head. This will cool the brain and the eyes. Be quick. Hurry up. Get ready soon. The brahmamuhurta will pass away quickly. You must utilise this precious time in japa and meditation.

Sit in siddha, padma or sukha asana. Repeat some divine stotras or hymns, chant OM twelve times or do kirtan for five minutes before you start your japa and meditation. This will quickly elevate your mind and drive off laziness and sleepiness. Do sirshasana or sarvangasana or any asana for five minutes. Do pranayama for five minutes. This also will make you quite fit for the practice of meditation and will remove laziness and sleepy condition. You will have wonderful meditation. After finishing your japa and meditation you can take to the practice of asana, pranayama and study of the *Bhagavad Gita* and other religious books.

If you are not in the habit of getting up early, have an alarm clock. Once the habit is established there will be no difficulty. The subconscious mind will become your willing and obedient servant to wake you up at the particular time.

If you are subject to chronic constipation you can drink a tumblerful of cold water or luke-warm water as soon as you get up after cleansing the teeth. This will give you a good motion. You can drink triphala water also. Soak two 'harad' (myrobalan), two 'amalaka' and two 'thandrikkai' in a tumblerful of cold water at night. Drink the water in the morning after cleansing the teeth — or you can keep a ready-made powder of these and put one or two teaspoonfuls in the water.

Cultivate the habit of answering the calls of nature as soon as you get up from bed. If you suffer from incurable constipation do meditation as soon as you get up. After finishing your morning meditation you can answer the calls of nature with the help of a cup of hot milk.

Dusk is also favourable for meditation. During brahmamuhurta and dusk, *sushumna nadi flows readily. You will enter into deep meditation and samadhi without much effort when sushumna-nadi flows. That is the reason why sages, yogis and scriptures speak very highly of these two periods of time. When the breath flows evenly through both nostrils, know that the sushumna is working. Whenever the sushumna functions, sit for meditation and enjoy the inner peace of the Atman or soul.

You can have good meditation on Sundays, because it is a holiday and the mind is free. Do vigorous meditation on Sundays. Always choose that part of the day or night when your mind is clear and when you are least likely to be disturbed. You can have a sitting just before retiring to bed. The mind will be calm at this time.

Meditation for one hour in the morning and for one hour in the evening must be practised by all to start with. The hours of practice must be gradually increased. After six months or one year, according to your mental calibre, you can have three sittings, a third in the afternoon 4 to 5 p.m. You can increase the period of concentration little by little, to two hours at each sitting. In summer, however, it is rather irksome and difficult owing to heat and perspiration, so have only two sittings during summer. The loss can be made up in winter. Winter is very favourable for meditation. If you have not got sufficient leisure you can meditate even for a few

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

minutes — say ten or fifteen — at night. You will have no bad dreams at night. The divine thoughts will be carried during sleep also. The good impressions will be there.

Another important point is that the Brahmic feeling must be kept up all the twenty-four hours. There must be an unceasing continuous flow of consciousness. You must not forget the idea of 'I am Brahman' or the divine presence even for a single second. Forgetfulness of God is genuine death. It is real suicide. This is the highest sin.

Reasons for Failure

Some people in whom the intellect (reason) is much developed have got the habit of entering into unnecessary controversies and discussions. They cannot remain quiet even for a second. They will create opportunities for heated debates. Too much discussion ends in enmity and hostility. Much energy is wasted in useless discussions. Intellect is a help if it is used in the right direction of enquiry into the nature of God, but a hindrance if it is used in unnecessary discussions. Intellect takes the aspirant to the threshold of intuition — thus far and no further. Reason helps in inferring the existence of God and finding out suitable methods for Self-realisation. Intuition transcends reason but does not contradict reason. Intuition is direct perception of Truth, there is no reasoning here. Reasoning concerns matters of the physical plane. Wherever there is 'why' and 'wherefore', there is reasoning. In all transcendental matters which are beyond the reach of reason, reason is of no use.

Intellect helps a lot in reflection and ratiocination. But people in whom reasoning is highly developed become sceptical. Their reason becomes perverted also. They lose faith in scriptures and in the teachings of saints. They say: "We are rationalists. We cannot believe anything which does not appeal to our reason. We do not believe in the *Upanishads.* We reject anything that does not come within the domain of reason. We have no faith in God and sad-gurus." These so-called rationalists are a type of atheist only. It is very difficult to convince them. They have an impure, perverted reason. Thoughts of God cannot enter their minds. They will not do any kind of spiritual sadhana. They say: "Show us your Brahman of the *Upanishads.*" Those who are of a doubting nature will perish.

Reason is a finite instrument. It cannot explain many mysterious problems of life. Those who are free from so-called rationalism and scepticism can march in the path of God-realisation. Give up arguing, become silent and look within. All your doubts will be cleared and you will get a flash of divine knowledge. The pages of the internal book of divine knowledge will be clearly revealed to you. Practise this and feel.

Aspirants should not indulge in sundry talks and miscellaneous thoughts just to ease the mind. They should be serious, they should think and talk of God alone. Too much talking is one of the bad habits which lessen the spiritual power. If a man talks too much he suffers from diarrhoea of the tongue. Quiet people cannot sit even for a second in the company of these loquacious or garrulous people. They will talk five hundred words per second. There is an electric talking-dynamo in their tongues, they are restless people. If you lock these people for a day in a solitary room, they will die. The organ of speech distracts the mind considerably. A talkative man cannot dream of having peace even for a short time. An aspirant should talk only a few words when necessary and that too, on spiritual matters only. A talkative man is unfit for the spiritual path.

Energy is wasted in useless idle talk and gossiping, planning and unnecessary worry. Conserve energy by getting rid of these three defects and utilise it in meditation on God. You can do wonderful meditation then. If you want to do some dynamic worldly activities for world solidarity you can turn out marvellous work by conserving the energy which leaks through useless channels.

The effects of evil company are highly disastrous. The aspirant should shun all sorts of evil company. The mind is filled with bad ideas by contact with evil company and the little faith in God and scriptures also vanishes. 'A man is known by the company he keeps.' 'Birds of the same feather flock together.' These are proverbs or wise maxims. They are quite true. Just as a nursery is to be well-fenced in the beginning for protection against cows, etc., so also the neophyte should protect himself very carefully from evil influences, otherwise he will be ruined totally. The company of those who speak lies; who commit adultery, theft, cheating and double-dealing; who are greedy; who indulge in idle talk, back-biting and tale-bearing and who have no faith in God and in the scriptures etc., should be strictly avoided.

Mind is ever changing and wandering. This wandering habit of the mind manifests itself in various ways. You will have to be on the alert always to check it. A householder's mind wanders to cinema, theatre, circus, etc. A sadhu's mind will wander to Benares, Brindavan, Nasik, etc. Many sadhus never stick to one place during sadhana. The wandering habit of the mind must be controlled by making it stick to one place, one method of sadhana, one guru and one form of yoga. A rolling stone gathers no moss. When you take up a book for study, you must finish it before you take up another. When you take up any work, you must devote your whole-hearted attention towards the work on hand and finish it before you take up another work. One thing at a time.

Centralise your ideas and develop thereby the inner power of the Self. Centralisation will stop the outgoing habit of the mind and will develop its powers. Centralisation of ideas means centralisation of your energy.

Just as the man who foolishly runs after two rabbits will not catch hold of either of them, so also a meditator who runs after two conflicting thoughts will not get success in either of the two thoughts. If he has divine thoughts for ten minutes and then worldly conflicting thoughts for the next ten minutes, he will not succeed in getting divine consciousness. You must run after one rabbit only, with vigour, strength and a one-pointed mind. You are sure to catch it. You must have only divine thoughts, at all times. Then you will be sure to realise God soon.

There is always a complaint amongst the aspirants: "I am meditating for the last twelve years, I have not made any improvement, I have no realisation." Why is it so? What is the reason? They have not plunged themselves in deep meditation, into the innermost recesses of their hearts. They have not properly assimilated and saturated the mind with thoughts of God. They have not done regular systematic sadhana nor disciplined the senses perfectly. They have not collected all the out-going rays of the mind. They have not made the self-determination: 'I will realise this very second'. They have not given their entire mind to God, nor kept up an unceasing flow of divine consciousness.

Untrained aspirants generally mistake their own imaginations and impulses for the 'inner voice' or intuition. He who says (or imagines), "I practise deep meditation daily," when he has not removed the evil traits or qualities of the mind, deceives himself first and then others. He is a first class confirmed hypocrite.

Those people who have not practised any yoga discipline or curbing of the senses, thoughts or impurities, will find it difficult to practise concentration and meditation. Their minds will be ever oscillating like a wild bull or a monkey. As you are not used to meditation you feel tired and hungry when you sit for meditation. This will pass off soon. Continue your practice.

When you climb the ladder of yoga, when you walk in the spiritual path, if the memory of past experiences recurs again and again the old mental images will be energised or galvanised. They will express themselves with redoubled force again and again. They will crowd together or come in packs or in multitudes or in a party and attack you with formidable vehemence. Do not look back, do not remember your past experiences, kill all memory of your past experiences. Remember God. Build up your mental feeling of Brahman strongly. Strengthen it. Keep it steady by regular and constant meditation. A single thought of your past experience will give a new lease of life to the thought-image or memory picture, rejuvenate and strengthen it, and it will pull you down. It will be difficult for you to climb up again.

You will have to note very carefully whether you remain stationary in the spiritual path even after many years of spiritual practice, or whether you are progressing. Sometimes you may go downwards also if you are not vigilant and careful, if your dispassion wanes and you are slack in meditation. Reaction may set in. Some practise meditation for a period of fifteen years and yet they have not made any real progress at all. Why? This is due to lack of earnestness, dispassion, keen longing for liberation and intense, constant sadhana. Just as cultivation in hard land or saltish earth becomes absolutely fruitless, so also meditation done without dispassion becomes fruitless.

You are not able to enter into samadhi because you are not able to practise meditation. You are not able to do profound meditation because you are not able to fix the mind steadily, or concentrate. You are not able to concentrate properly, because you are not able to practise the withdrawal of the senses from the object thoroughly. You are not able to practise this thoroughly because you have not obtained mastery over apana and prana through pranayama, and you are not established in ethics and moral principles which are the foundation of yoga.

If you strain yourself in meditation and go beyond your capacity, laziness and inactive nature will supervene. Meditation should come naturally on account of serenity of the mind induced by the practice of tranquillity, self-control, satiety in the enjoyment of sense pleasures, and sense control. Atman is the fountain of energy. Thinking of the Atman, the source of energy, is also a dynamic method for augmenting energy, strength and power.

You will get the full bliss of the divine glory only when you dive deep, when you merge deep into silent meditation. When you are on the border-land of divinity or God, when you are at the gate or threshold of God, when you are in the outskirts, you will not get the maximum peace and bliss.

As a result of purification the mind becomes more sensitive, gets easily disturbed by a sound or a shock and feels any pressure acutely. An aspirant must be sensitive and yet have the body and nerves completely under control. The greater the sensitiveness becomes, the more difficult is the task. There are many noises which pass unheeded by an ordinary person but which are tortures to one who is very sensitive.

Artha (wealth) is really anartha (evil). To earn wealth is painful, to protect the wealth is still more painful. If wealth is reduced it is also painful and if it is lost it gives unbearable pain. You cannot earn and amass wealth without doing great sins. Wealth brings much anxiety. Therefore, shun wealth.

Retired officers remain on the banks of the Ganges and practise japa and meditation for several years, but they do not make any solid progress. Why? Because they utilise their big pensions for themselves and for their sons and daughters. They do not spend it on charity. They depend upon money for everything. Let them spend all their money on charity and rely on God. Let them live on alms. They will surely have solid spiritual progress.

If the aspirant has the nature of being offended for trifling things he cannot make any progress in meditation. He should cultivate and amiable loving nature and adaptability. Then this bad habit will vanish. Some aspirants get easily offended if their bad qualities and defects are pointed out. They become indignant and begin to fight with the man who shows their defects. They think the man is concocting them out of jealousy or hatred. This is very bad. Other people can very easily find out our defects. A man who has no life of introspection, whose mind is of outgoing tendencies, cannot find out his own mistakes. The self-conceit acts as a veil and blurs the mental vision. If an aspirant wants to grow he must admit his defects if they are pointed out by others. He must do his level best to eradicate them, and he must thank the man who points out his defects. Then only can he grow in spirituality.

If you quarrel with somebody or if you have a heated debate with anybody you cannot meditate for three or four days. Your balance of mind will be upset. Much energy will be wasted in useless channels. The blood will become hot. Do not cause pain or suffering to any living being through greed, selfishness, irritability and annoyance. Give up anger and ill-will. Give up the spirit of fighting and heated debates. Don't argue.

You may be living in a solitary cave in the Himalayas and practising meditation, but if the memory of your past experiences in the plains comes and if you allow the mind to dwell on it again and again, you are actually living on the plains only, though your abode is in the solitary retreats of the Himalayas. Further, you do not lead the perfect divine life in the cave, because you lead the past worldly life again subjectively in the sacred cave. Thought is the real action.

Preparation for Meditation

In a lonely place, spread a four-folded blanket and over this spread a piece of soft, white cloth. This will do nicely. If you can get a good tiger skin or deer skin, it is all the better. A tiger skin has got its own advantages. It generates electricity in the body quickly and does not allow leakage of electric current from the body. It is full of magnetism.

Sit on padma, siddha or sukha asana. Keep the head, neck and back in one straight line. Face east or north. A spiritual neophyte should observe this rule. In facing north he is in communion with the sages of the Himalayas and he is mysteriously benefited by their currents.

Free yourself from all passions, emotions and impulses. Subjugate the senses. Withdraw the mind from objects. Then the mind will be calm, one-pointed, pure and subtle. With the help of this trained instrument, the disciplined mind, contemplate on that one infinite Self or God. Do not think of anything else.

Constantly think of God. The mind should always move towards God. Fasten the mind with a fine silk thread to the lotus feet of Lord Siva or Hari and do not allow any worldly thought to enter the mind. Do not allow the mind to think of any physical or mental enjoyment. When it indulges in these thoughts, give it a good hammering. Then it will move towards God. Just as the Ganges flows continuously towards the sea, thoughts of God should flow continuously towards the Lord. Just as the harmonious sound produced from the ringing of bells falls upon the ear in a continuous stream, so also the mind should come towards God in one continuous stream. There must be a continuous divine thought-current from the pure mind towards God, through continuous sadhana.

All physical activities should be completely suspended, all attachments should be ruthlessly cut asunder completely for five or six years if you want to practise meditation, if you want to realise God through concentration of mind. Newspaper reading and correspondence with friends and relatives should be completely stopped, as they cause distraction of mind and strengthen the world idea.

Habitual meditation and habitual silence are great assets for you in the spiritual path. Meditation gives a lot of spiritual strength, peace, new vigour and vitality. If a meditator gets irritated very often it shows he is not having good, uninterrupted meditation. There is something wrong with his sadhana and contemplation.

You will have to meditate with a calm mind. Then only will you enter into samadhi quickly. If you control the senses and if you become desireless you will have a calm mind. Keen longing for liberation and thoughts of God will destroy all desires. He who has a calm mind is the Emperor of emperors, the Shah of shahs. The state of one who has a calm mind is indescribable.

In meditation and concentration you will have to train the mind in a variety of ways. Then only the gross mind will become subtle.

Signs of Progress

The following are the signs that indicate that you are growing in meditation and approaching God:

The world will have no attraction for you. The sensual objects will no longer tempt you. You will become desireless, fearless, 'I'-less and 'mine'-less. Attachment to the body will gradually dwindle. You will not entertain the ideas, "She is my wife; he is my son; this is my house." You will feel that all are manifestations of the Lord. You will behold God in every object.

The body and mind will become light. You will always be cheerful and happy. The name of the Lord will be always on your lips. The mind will be ever fixed at the lotus feet of the Lord and ever producing the image of the Lord. You will actually feel that purity, light, bliss, knowledge and divine love are ever flowing from the Lord to you and filling up your heart.

You will have no body-consciousness. Even if there be body-consciousness it will be in the form of a mental residuum. A drunkard may not have full consciousness that he has a cloth round his body. He may feel that something is loosely hanging from his body. Even so, you will have a feeling of the body. You will feel that something is sticking to you like a loose cloth or loose shoes.

You will not be attracted by sex. You will have no sex idea. Women will appear to you as manifestations of the Lord. Money and gold will appear to you as pieces of stone. You will have intense love for all creatures. You will be absolutely free from lust, greed, anger, jealousy, pride, delusion, etc. You will have peace of mind even when people insult you, beat you and persecute you. The reason why you are not perturbed is that you get immense spiritual strength from the Indweller, or the Lord. Pain or pleasure, success or failure, honour or dishonour, respect or disrespect, gain or loss, are alike for you.

Even in dreams you will be in communion with the Lord. You will not behold any worldly pictures. You will converse with the Lord in the beginning, you will see Him in physical form. When your consciousness becomes cosmic, conversation will stop. You will enjoy the language of silence or the language of the heart. From vocal speech you will pass on to subtler and subtler forms of sounds and eventually you will rest in the soundless OMkara or soundless Brahman.

Dispassion and discrimination, serenity, self-restraint, one-pointedness of mind, non-violence, truthfulness, purity, forbearance, fortitude, patience, forgiveness, absence of anger, spirit of service, sacrifice and love for all will be your habitual qualities. You will be a cosmic friend and benefactor.

Contentment, unruffled state of the mind, cheerfulness, patience, decrease in the excretions, sweet voice, eagerness and steadiness in the practice of meditation, disgust for worldly prosperity or success and company, desire to remain alone in a quiet room or in seclusion, desire for association with spiritual aspirants (sadhus) and monks (sannyasins), and one-pointedness of mind are some of the signs which indicate that you are growing in purity, that you are prospering in the spiritual path.

Pure emotions will rise in your heart. You will feel that the whole world is nothing but pure consciousness. The tables, chairs, men, women and other things will all appear to contain this consciousness, just as vessels contain their contents. You will feel that all things are made of this consciousness. This rare experience will give you great bliss. You will feel that the Lord is sporting in all things as this pure consciousness. You will actually lose the sense of the material nature of things around you.

You will have realisation with form at the anahata chakra. You will experience nirvikalpa samadhi at the sahasrara.

If your general health is sound; if you are cheerful, happy and strong physically and mentally; if the mind is peaceful and unruffled; if you get bliss in meditation and if your will is growing strong, pure and irresistible think that you are improving in meditation and everything is going all right.

The Power of Silence

When you enter the silence through deep meditation the world outside and all your troubles will drop away. You will enjoy supreme peace. In this silence is the supreme light of lights; in this silence is undecaying bliss; in this silence is real strength and joy.

Understand the power of silence. The power of silence is infinitely greater than lectures, talks, orations and discourses. Lord Dakshinamurty taught the four youths — Sanaka, Sanadhana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara — through silence. The language of silence is the language of God, the language of silence is the language of the heart. Sit silently and restrain the mental modifications. Sit silently and send out inner spiritual force to the whole world. The whole universe will be benefited. Live in silence. Become silent. Rest in silence. Know the Self and be free.

Meditation and Work

Advanced yoga students who are householders will have to stop all their worldly activities when they advance in meditation, if they are really sincere. Work is a hindrance to meditation for advanced students. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "*For a sage who is seeking yoga, action is called the means. For the same sage who is enthroned in yoga, serenity is called the means.*" (VI-3) Then work and meditation become incompatible like acid and alkali, fire and water or light and darkness.

When you advance in spiritual practice it will be very difficult for you to do meditation and office work at the same time, because the mind will undergo double strain. It works in different grooves and channels during meditation. It finds it very difficult to adjust to different kinds of uncongenial activities. As soon as it comes down from meditation it gropes in darkness. It gets bewildered and puzzled as it has to work in different grooves and channels. When you sit again for meditation in the evening you will have to struggle hard to wipe out the newly acquired tendencies you have gathered during the course of the day and get calm one-pointedness of mind. This struggle brings in headache sometimes. The prana (energy) which moves inward in different grooves and channels and which is subtle during the meditation, has to move in different channels during worldly activities. It has to become very gross during work.

When you have disinclination for work and a desire for meditation only, you can lead a life of complete seclusion, living on milk and fruits alone. You will have good spiritual progress. When there is inclination for work, when the meditative mood vanishes, take up work again. Thus by gradual practice the mind should be moulded.

You will have to pass through various stages of meditation and finally you will enter into perfect nirvikalpa samadhi or superconscious state. Form-perception and reflex-perception will totally vanish. Then there will be neither meditator nor meditated. The meditator and the meditated become one.

O aspirants! Struggle hard. Make sincere efforts. Meditate regularly and systematically. Never miss a day in meditation. There will be a great loss if you lose even a day.

No more words! Enough of discussions and heated debates. Retire into a solitary room. Close your eyes. Have deep, silent meditation. Feel His presence. Repeat His name — OM — with fervour, joy and love. Fill your heart with divine love. Destroy the ideas, thoughts, whims, fancies and desires when they arise to the surface of the mind. Withdraw the wandering mind and fix it on the Lord. Now meditation will become deep and intense. Do not open your eyes, do not stir from the seat. Merge in Him, dive deep into the recesses of the heart, plunge into the shining Atman. Drink the nectar of immortality. You will attain the highest knowledge and eternal supreme peace. This is the goal of life, the aim of existence, the final beatitude of life. You will become an established sage or illumined jivanmukta, you will be liberated while living. You will be absolutely free from pain, sorrow, fear, doubt and delusion. You will become identical with Brahman. The bubble will become the ocean; the river will join the ocean and become the ocean. All differences and distinctions will totally vanish. You will experience: "I am the immortal Self. All indeed is Brahman. There is nothing but Brahman."

KINDS OF MEDITATION

There are different kinds of meditation. A particular kind is best suited to a particular mind. The kind of meditation varies according to taste, temperament, capacity and type of mind of the individual. A devotee meditates on his tutelary deity; a raja yogi meditates on the special Purusha or Ishvara who is not touched by afflictions, desires and karmas; a hatha yogi meditates on the chakras and their presiding deities and a jnani meditates on his own Self or Atman. You will have to find out yourself the kind of meditation that is suitable for you. If you are not able to do this you have to consult a teacher or preceptor who has attained Self-realisation. He will be able to know the nature of your mind and the correct method of meditation for you.

Meditation is of two main kinds, saguna (concrete) meditation and nirguna (abstract) meditation. In concrete meditation the yoga student concentrates on the form of Lord Krishna, Rama, Siva, Hari, Jesus Christ, Buddha, Gayatri or Sri Devi. (An aspirant can meditate on the physical form of his guru.) In abstract meditation he concentrates the whole energy of the mind on one idea of God or Atman and avoids the comparisons of memories and all other ideas. The one idea fills the whole mind.

Without undergoing a course of concrete meditation in the beginning, especially for the ordinary type of person, it is absolutely impossible to start abstract meditation at the very outset. The vast majority of aspirants commit a serious mistake in jumping to abstract meditation all at once. They will only have a downfall. The mind is so formed that it demands a form to cling to. Meditation on a form, i.e. a stone-image or a picture, should be practised. The stone-image remains the stone which it is, but the devotion of the devotee goes to the Lord. He is pleased. Divine grace will surely descend. You will have to superimpose the attributes of God on the stone-image. You will have to imagine that there is the Antaratma (inner Soul) hidden in the image, that there is the all-pervading, indwelling presence or the pure consciousness at the back of it.

A child makes a toy-child (doll) of rags, and plays with it with motherly instincts of nursing and protection. The doll remains the same, but the child develops the motherly instincts for future development and manifestation. Even so, in worshipping an image a devotee develops devotion, bhakti, grace, love, feeling of separation and ecstacy, and eventually supreme love and devotion.

When you meditate with open eyes on the concrete figure of Lord Krishna it is a concrete form of meditation. When you reflect over the image of Lord Krishna by closing your eyes, it is also a concrete form of meditation, but it is more abstract. When you meditate on the infinite abstract light, it is still more abstract meditation. The former two types belong to saguna form of meditation, the latter to nirguna form. Even in nirguna meditation there is a concrete form in the beginning for fixing the mind. Later on this form vanishes and the meditator and the meditated become one.

When you repeat: 'Om Namo Narayanaya' mentally or verbally it is mere japa. When you repeat the mantra and at the same time you meditate on the form of Lord Hari with conch, discus, mace, lotus, yellow silken cloth, armlets, bracelets, etc., it is called japa sahita dhyana. When you progress in meditation the japa will drop by itself and you will have pure meditation only. This will constitute japa rahita dhyana.

By worship and meditation or japa of mantras the mind is actually shaped into the form of the object of worship, and is made pure for the time being through the purity of the object (namely, the chosen deity). By continual practice the mind becomes full of the object to the exclusion of all else, it becomes steady in its purity and does not wander into impurity. So long as the mind exists it must have an object, and the object of sadhana is to present it with a pure one.

The sound of a mantra repeatedly and harmoniously uttered in japa must create or project into perception the corresponding thing, the deity. The mantras gather creative momentum by repetition through the force of latent impressions.

When one is established in meditation and attains the stage of supreme devotion he sees his chosen deity only, everywhere. The names and forms vanish. A devotee of Lord Krishna sees Lord Krishna only everywhere and experiences the state described in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Everything is Vasudeva (Krishna) only". A jnani or a vedantin sees his own Self or Atman everywhere. The world of names and forms vanishes from his view. He experiences the utterances of the seers of the *Upanishads*: "All indeed is Brahman".

When you read a book with absorbing interest and attention your mind gets fixed to the ideas. Even so, in formless meditation on God the mind is fixed on one idea, that of the Atman.

If the readers of works dealing with Atma-jnana take delight therein and are not hasty in longing for the fruits at once, but meditate regularly and gradually upon them, then the mind will by degrees be ripened, and in the end the endless Atman will be reached.

Light of Lights

The Light of lights, which transcends darkness, which transcends inertia, which is attainable through knowledge, is seated in your heart. Nowhere will you find this idea in Western philosophical books. If you study Western philosophical books (say, ten or fifteen volumes) at the end you may find yourself to be an agnostic. That is the difference between the teachings of the Eastern sages and the writings of Western philosophers. It is only a realised sage like Lord Krishna who can give the essence of human existence and of all the scriptures in one sentence: "*Brahman is the Light of lights, seated in the hearts of all.*" (*Bhagavad Gita* XV-12 & 15)

That Light of lights which transcends darkness, which transcends the three gunas, is close to you, closer than the jugular vein, closer than your breath. You will have to obtain this through wisdom and meditation.

Every sense organ is a light, because through the organs of perception you get knowledge of the world. The ear is a light, the eye is a light. Intellect is a light. Prana is a light. He who gives light to these — this Light of lights — is your own Atman.

"*I am that Siva (Supreme Being) who is the inner light, the outer light, the innermost light in the heart, transcending the highest. Light of all lights, self-effulgent and the light of the Atman.*" If you meditate on this you will attain illumination and be established in the supreme Light of lights.

"*The sun does not shine there, neither the moon nor the stars nor lightning. Through It's light all the objects of this world are illuminated. The senses and mind are illuminated. The mind, intellect and senses borrow their light from the ultimate Source, the fountain Source of everything.*"

There is another Upanishadic verse where the method of attaining the Self is given: "*By truth, by austerity, by cosmic consciousness and by constant practice of celibacy, you will find the Light of lights, bright and self-effulgent, in your own body. It is attained by those who are free from all defects and all mental modifications.*"

Fear is a defect. Sleep is a defect. He who has controlled sleep by meditation on the Atman, who has stopped the vibration of prana, beholds the Light of lights. The world exists because prana vibrates. When there is vibration of prana, there is life. He who has controlled the prana becomes immortal. He who has conquered sleep attains the Light of lights. He rests in his own Atman and enjoys the supreme bliss.

So let us practise meditation, either saguna (concrete), nirguna (abstract) or meditation on light (jyotir-dhyana) and become one with the supreme Light of lights, free ourselves from the trammels of karma and become jivanmuktas — not in the unknown future, but in this very birth.

Patanjali suggests various methods for meditation, such as:

> *Meditate on the effulgent one in the lotus of the heart who is beyond sorrow.*(1-36)
> *Meditate on the heart that has given up all attachment to sense objects.* (I-37)
> *Meditate on the knowledge that comes in sleep.* (I-38)

And, lastly, he has introduced the sutra:

> *Meditate on anything that appeals to you as good.* (I-39)

The following story illustrates that meditation on any subject which the mind likes best is very easy.

Meditation on a Buffalo

Krishna Chaitanya, a brahmachari in Omkar Ashram on the banks of the holy river Narmada, went to Ram Acharya and prayed to him to teach him the method of meditation. Ram Acharya said to him: "Oh Krishna Chaitanya, meditate on Lord Krishna having crossed legs and flute in hand, located in the midst of a big sun in the lotus of your heart, and repeat mentally the famous Krishna mantra: 'Om namo bhagavate Vasudevaya'."

Krishna Chaitanya said: "Guruji, I am quite dull-headed. I cannot do this. This is too difficult for me. The mantra is very very long. Kindly suggest an easy method."

Ram Acharya said: "Oh Krishna Chaitanya! Do not be afraid. I will tell you an easy way. Hearken. Place a beautiful, small brass idol of Sri Krishna in front of you. Sit in padmasana. Look at this idol, its hands, legs, etc., with attention. Do not look at any other object."

Krishna Chaitanya replied, "Oh Guruji, this is still more difficult. Sitting with crossed legs will give severe pain in the hips and the knees. If I think of the pain I cannot look at the idol. I have to sit steadily, look with attention and mark carefully the various parts. I cannot do more than one action at a time and I cannot remember more than two things at a time. Oh Guruji Maharaj, kindly show me a very very easy way."

Ram Acharya said: "Oh Krishna Chaitanya, place the photo of your father in front of you. Sit in front of the photo in any way you like. Simply look at the figure for a short time."

Krishna Chaitanya replied: "Oh Guruji, my protector, this is also difficult, because I am very much afraid of my father. He is a terrible man. He used to beat me severely. I tremble the very moment I think of his form. This would never suit me. This method is more difficult than the previous ones. I pray, Guruji, kindly suggest a very very simple method this time. I will surely follow."

Ram Acharya said: "Oh Krishna Chaitanya, tell me now, which thing do you like best?"

Krishna Chaitanya replied: "Oh Guruji, I have tended a buffalo in my house. I have taken plenty of milk, curd and butter from that buffalo. I like it best of all. I constantly remember it."

Ram Acharya said: "Krishna Chaitanya, now go to this room, lock the door. Sit in a corner on a mat and constantly think and meditate on this buffalo only, to the exclusion of all other objects. Do not think of anything else."

Now Krishna Chaitanya was very much pleased. With a gay and cheerful mind he went inside the room, followed the instructions of the guru implicitly and began to meditate on the buffalo intensely, with one-pointed mind. He did not get up from the seat for three days continuously. He forgot all about his food, he was unconscious of his body and surroundings. He was deeply absorbed in the form of the buffalo.

Ram Acharya came on the third day to the room of Krishna Chaitanya to see his condition, and found him absorbed in meditation. With a loud voice the guru called out: "Oh Krishna Chaitanya, how do you feel? Come outside to take your food."

Krishna Chaitanya replied: "Oh Guruji, I am very grateful to you. I am in deep meditation now. I cannot come out. I am very big. Horns have grown out of my head. I cannot get out of the small door. I like the buffalo very much. I myself have become a buffalo also."

Ram Acharya found that Krishna Chaitanya's mind had attained a one-pointed state and was quite fit for attaining samadhi. He said: "Oh Krishna Chaitanya, you are not a buffalo. Now change your meditation. You are not a buffalo. Forget the name and form of the buffalo and meditate on the underlying essence of the buffalo, sat-chid-ananda (existence, knowledge, bliss), which is your real nature."

Krishna Chaitanya changed his method, adhered to his guru's instructions and attained liberation (kaivalya mukti), the goal of life.

Meditation on Virat Purusha

Sit in padma or siddha asana in your meditation room and meditate on the following thoughts for half an hour daily for six months: (This is a gross form of meditation.)

1. Heaven is His head.
2. Earth is His foot.
3. Quarters are His hands.
4. Sun and Moon are His eyes.

5. Fire is His mouth.
6. Righteousness is His back.
7. Grass and herbs are His hairs.
8. Mountains are His bones.
9. Sea is His bladder.
10. Rivers are His arteries and veins.

The mind will expand now. Afterwards take to meditation on a form of God, such as Rama, Krishna, Siva, Jesus or Buddha. Have this kind of meditation for a year. Then have recourse to formless meditation on Brahman. By the practice of these various methods the mind becomes a fit instrument to take up abstract meditation on an abstract idea.

Saguna Meditation

This is meditation on an image. This is the concrete form of meditation for people of devotional temperament (bhakti marga). This is meditation on the attributes of God, where you repeat His name and also think of His attributes like omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc. Your mind will be filled with purity. Any favourite picture of your chosen tutelary deity is excellent for concrete meditation. Enthrone Him in the lotus of your heart amidst a blazing light. Mentally think of His various attributes again and again.

Select any image you like best — either Siva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Jesus or Buddha — according to your inclination or taste; or follow the directions of your guru, who will select the form of God best suited to you. The selected deity will guide you.

Practise *tratak on the picture for six months. After six months practice of tratak, meditate on the mental picture of a form or image in the space between the two eyebrows, from half to two hours at a time. See and feel that the deity is present in every object in the universe. When you meditate, mentally repeat the mantra of the deity. Think of the attributes of the deity, such as omnipotence, omniscience, etc. Feel that the pure qualities from the deity flow towards you. Feel that you possess this pure attitude. You will have the vision of your deity in one or two years if you are sincere in your practice.

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* See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

An archer first aims at grosser, bigger objects. Then he takes up medium sized objects. Finally, he shoots at finer and subtler objects. Even so, one should take to saguna meditation to start with, and when the mind is trained and disciplined well he can have abstract formless meditation. Devotional meditation on a form removes restlessness of mind.

Simple Saguna Exercises

1. Place a picture of Lord Jesus in front of you. Sit in your favourite meditative pose. Concentrate gently with open eyes on the picture till tears trickle down your cheeks. Rotate the mind on the cross, the chest, the long hair, beautiful beard, round eyes and the various other limbs of His body, the fine spiritual aura emanating from His head, and so on. Think of His divine attributes, the various phases of His interesting life, the miracles He performed and the various 'extraordinary' powers He possessed. Then close the eyes and try to visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

2. Place a picture of Lord Hari in front of you. Sit in your meditative posture. Concentrate gently on the picture till you shed tears. Rotate the mind on His feet, legs, yellow silken robes, golden garland set with diamonds, etc. on the chest, the ear-rings, then the face, the crown of the head, the disc on the right upper hand, the conch on the left upper hand, the mace on the right lower hand and the lotus flower on the left lower hand. Then close the eyes and try to visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

3. Keep a picture of Lord Krishna with flute in hands. Sit in your meditative pose and gently concentrate on the picture till you shed tears. Think of His feet adorned with anklets, yellow garment, various ornaments round His neck, the necklace set with the kaustubha gem, the long garland of beautiful flowers of various colours, ear-rings, crown set with precious jewels of priceless value, dark and long hair, sparkling eyes, the sacred mark on the forehead, the magnetic aura round His head, long hands adorned with bracelets and armlets, and the flute in the hands ready to be played upon. Then close your eyes and visualise the picture. Repeat the same process again and again.

4. Take the picture of Lord Vishnu with four hands and meditate as follows: see with the mind His feet first, then legs, then His yellow silken cloth, then His golden ornament set with diamonds, kaustubha gem, etc., on His breast, then the ear-ring, then the face, then the crown of the head, the discus on the right upper hand, the conch on the upper left hand, the mace on the lower right hand, the lotus flower on the left lower hand. This is the order. Then come down to the feet and start again to the upper parts. By this method the mind will not run towards objects.

5. This is one kind of meditation for beginners: Sit in padmasana in your meditation room. Close your eyes. Meditate on the effulgence in the sun, the splendour in the moon or the glory in the stars.

6. Meditate on the magnanimity of the ocean and its infinite nature. Then compare the ocean to the infinite Brahman, and the waves, foam and icebergs to the various names and forms. Identify yourself with the ocean. Become silent. Expand, expand.

7. Meditate on the Himalayas. Imagine how the Ganges takes its origin in the icy regions of Gangotri near Uttarkashi, flows through Rishikesh, Hardwar and Benares and then enters into the Bay of Bengal near Gangasagar. Himalayas, Ganges and the sea — these three thoughts only should occupy your mind. First take your mind to the icy regions of Gangotri, then along the Ganges and finally to the sea. Rotate the mind in this manner for 10 minutes.

8. Imagine that there is a fine garden with lovely flowers. In one corner there are jasmine flowers, in another corner there are beautiful cabbage roses, in the third corner there is the 'queen of the night' and in the fourth corner there are champaka flowers. First meditate on the jasmine. Then take the mind to the rose, then to the 'queen of the night' and finally to the champaka. Again rotate the mind as above. Do this again and again for 15 minutes.

These preliminary practices will make the mind more and more subtle and render it fit to take up nirguna (formless) meditation.

Meditation on a Rose

Sit in padma, siddha or sukha asana in a room set apart only for meditation, and meditate on the colour, form and the various parts of a rose, such as the petals, stalk, pollen, etc.; on the various kinds of roses, such as a white rose, yellow rose, red rose, cabbage rose; on the various preparations, such as rose water, rose syrup, attar of roses and essence of rose confections; think of the diverse uses of rose, such as rose water for cleaning the eyes in ophthalmia, gulkand as a laxative in constipation, the flowers and garlands for worship of God, for wearing etc; think of the various virtuous properties such as its cooling effect on the system, its carminative properties; the price of rose and garlands of roses; the places where they are found in abundance and various other items connected with the rose. You must exclude any other foreign thought associated with other objects. By this concrete method the mind becomes fit for abstract meditation. Practise for half an hour daily in the morning at 5 a.m. for a month.

Meditation on Twelve Virtues

Meditate on these twelve virtues for ten minutes daily:

Humility, in January
Frankness, in February
Courage, in March
Patience, in April
Mercy, in May
Magnanimity, in June
Sincerity, in July
Pure love, in August
Generosity, in September
Forgiveness, in October
Balanced state of mind, in November
Contentment, in December

Meditate on purity, perseverance, diligence and cheerfulness also. Imagine that you are in the actual possession of these virtues. Say to yourself: "I am patient. I will not get irritated from today. I will manifest this virtue in my daily life. I am improving." Think of the advantages of possessing the virtue of patience and the disadvantages of irritability, for instance.

The spiritual path is rugged, thorny and precipitous. It is too long. The feet may become tired and bruised and the heart may pant, but the reward is very great. You will become immortal. Persevere, plod on diligently. Be on the alert. Be agile and nimble like the squirrel. There are resting places on the path. Hear the small inner voice. It will guide you if you are pure and sincere.

Meditation on Divine Songs

If you are well-versed in music, go to a lonely place and sing beautifully to your heart's content. Develop the ragas and raginis luxuriantly, from the bottom of your heart. Forget yourself, forget the past and the environment. This is an easy method. Select some fine chants, prayers or philosophical writings. Ram Prasad, a reputed saint of Bengal, realised in this way. Ram Prasad's songs are very famous throughout Bengal. Hear what Shakespeare says on music: "The man that hath no music in him nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds, is fit for treason, stratagem and spoils. The motions of his spirit are dull as night, his affections dark as Erebus. Let no such man be trusted."

You can quite easily withdraw the mind from the objects through singing. Singing immediately elevates and expands the mind. To fix an expanded mind on the saguna (with form) or nirguna (formless) Brahman is very easy. What is wanted here is good taste and skill in music with purity of heart and steady practice of concentration.

Meditation on Gita Slokas

Learn by heart some important verses in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Repeat them mentally after sitting in a steady pose. The following are some suggested verses:

1. There are some important verses which dwell on the 'Immortality of the Soul' in the second chapter. You can concentrate and meditate on these series of ideas. You will find this practice very very useful.
2. Meditate on the series of ideas from the verses which describe the state of one who is unshakeably established in super-consciousness, in the second chapter.

3. Meditate on the series of ideas from the verses which describe the effects of yoga, in the sixth chapter.
4. Meditate on the series of ideas from the verses which deal with the attributes of a knower of God (jnani), in the thirteenth chapter.
5. Meditate on the series of ideas from the verses which describe the nature of divine qualities, in the sixteenth chapter.
6. Meditate on the vision of the Cosmic Form, in the eleventh chapter.
7. Meditate on the verses 'Devotee dear to me', in the twelfth chapter.
8. Meditate on the idea of one who has transcended the gunas, in the fourteenth chapter.

I have given you eight sets of ideas. Select any set that appeals to you most. You can allow the mind to move from one set to another.

Meditation on Gayatri

Gayatri is the 'Blessed Mother' of the *Vedas*. It is a symbol of God, the Lord of created beings. Japa of Gayatri mantra produces purity of mind, without which you can do nothing in the spiritual line and without which you can never effect an iota of spiritual progress. Gayatri is an effective universal prayer. (It is also known as the Brahma Gayatri.)

Om bhur-bhuvah-svah tat-savitur-varenyam
bhargo devasya dheemahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat.

"*Let us meditate on the Creator and His glory, He who has created this universe, who is fit to be worshipped, who is the remover of all sins and ignorance. May He enlighten our (my) intellect.*"

Retire into the meditation room after bath just before sunrise. Sit on your meditation seat and repeat the mantra mentally as many times as you can (but not less than 108 times) and constantly feel that you are receiving light, purity and wisdom from Gayatri. Concentrate on the meaning of the Gayatri. This is important. Have your gaze at the space between the two eyebrows.

Uddhava's Meditation

Uddhava asked Lord Krishna: "O lotus-eyed! How to meditate on Thee! What is the nature of that meditation?"

Lord Krishna replied: "Be seated on the meditation seat that is neither low nor high, with your body erect and in an easy posture. Place your hands on the lap. Fix your gaze on the tip of the nose (in order to fix the mind). Purify the tracks of prana by inhalation, retention and exhalation, and then again in the reverse way (i.e. first breathe in by the left nostril with the right nostril closed with the thumb. Then close the left nostril with the ring finger and the little finger and retain the breath in both the nostrils. Then remove the thumb and breathe out through the right nostril. Reverse the process by breathing in through the right nostril, retaining the breath in both nostrils and letting out the breath through the left nostril.) Practise this pranayama gradually with your senses controlled.

"*OM with the sound of a bell extends all over, from the •muladhara upwards. Raise the OM in the heart by means of prana (twelve fingers upwards) as if it were the thread of a lotus stalk. There let bindu (the fifteenth vowel sound) be added to it. Thus practise pranayama accompanied by OM, reciting the latter ten times. Continue the practice three times a day, and within a month you shall be able to control the vital air. Within the body the lotus of the heart has its stalk upwards and the flower downwards, facing below. It is also closed. Meditate on it, however, as facing upwards and full-blown, with eight petals and with pericarp. On the pericarp, think of the sun, the moon and fire, one after another.

"Meditate on the following form of Mine within the fire: First meditate on all limbs. Then let the mind withdraw the senses from their objects, and with the help of the intellect, direct the concentrated mind completely towards My whole body. Then give up all other features and concentrate only on My smiling face. Do not meditate on anything else. Then withdraw the concentrated mind from that and fix it on the akasha (ether). Give up that also and

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* See page 265

• See Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga* being fixed in Me (as Brahman) think of nothing at all. You shall see Me in Atman as identical with the Atman in all, even as light is identical with another light. The delusions about objects, knowledge and action shall then completely disappear."

This is a beautiful exercise for meditation prescribed by Lord Krishna Himself in the *Bhagavata Purana*.

Vedantic Meditation

In vedanta, or the path of jnana, the terms 'manana' and 'nididhyasana' are very frequently used. Manana means driving away all thoughts of worldly objects and increasing the thought-currents of God or Brahman into a steady stream. Manana is preceded by hearing of the scriptures (sravana) and followed by nididhyasana of a constant nature with zeal and enthusiasm. (Nididhyasana is deep intense meditation.) The mind is perfectly established in the Absolute; no worldly thought will intrude. The contemplation is like the steady flow of oil. Direct realisation follows nididhyasana. Just as the drop of water when dropped on a hot iron is absorbed, as it were, by the hot iron, so also the mind and the reflected consciousness become absorbed in Brahman. The balance left is Consciousness-absolute. (Sravana, manana and nididhyasana of the vedantic sadhana correspond to dharana, dhyana and samadhi of raja yoga of Patanjali Maharishi.)

Even vedantic students have the ideas of all-pervading ether and light for their meditation in the beginning. They get help from the external elements. When you meditate or assert, negate the three bodies and identify yourself with the indwelling essence. Deny the names and forms. If the mind constantly dwells on sensual objects, the conception of the reality of the universe will surely increase. If the mind ceaselessly thinks of the Atman, the world appears like a dream. Free yourself from the base thoughts of the mind and the various useless imaginations. Make ceaseless enquiry of the Atman. Mark the word 'ceaseless'. This is important. Then only will there be the dawn of spiritual knowledge. Do not mistake either the physical body or the mind, the prana, the intellect or the senses, for the pure eternal Atman. The higher Self is entirely distinct from these illusory vehicles.

Meditate on the following formulae:

I am the All OM OM OM

I am all in All OM OM OM
I am the Immortal Self in All OM OM OM
I am the living Truth OM OM OM
I am the living Reality OM OM OM
I am the witness of the three states OM OM OM
I am Light of lights OM OM OM
I am unattached OM OM OM
I am Sun of suns OM OM OM
I am existence, knowledge, bliss absolute OM OM OM
(*sat-chit-ananda svarupoham*)
I am indivisible, homogeneous, pure consciousness alone OM OM OM
(*akhanda ekarasa chinmatroham*)
My essential nature is infinite bliss OM OM OM
(*bhumananda svarupoham*)
I am witness OM OM OM
(*Aham sakshi*)
I am pure consciousness alone without any special characteristics OM OM OM
(*nirvisesa chinmatroham*)
I am unattached OM OM OM
(*asangoham*)

You can do meditation while sitting, standing or walking. For beginners a sitting position is necessary. Repeat your guru mantra or the mantra of the tutelary deity mentally. Associate the ideas of purity; infinity; eternity; immortality; all-pervading, all-full, existence, knowledge, bliss Absolute; continuous, non-dual, limitless intelligence etc., with OM repetition.

Man tries to grasp the abstract through forms. After the mind has been purified, an abstract image is formed in the purified mind by listening to spiritual discourses and holy scriptures and contemplation of God. This abstract image melts later on in deep meditation. Here thinking ceases. What is left behind is pure Existence alone.

The mind should be adored as Brahman. This is intellectual worship. Mind is Brahman or God in manifestation. Mind is God in motion. As Brahman is approachable by means of the mind, it is only proper to meditate upon the mind as Brahman.

Allow the one idea of Brahman to flow gently and continuously. Drive out foreign or extraneous worldly ideas gently. Try to keep up the thought of Brahman alone to the exclusion of all other thoughts, by repeating OM or 'I am Brahman' mentally very often. The idea of infinity, the idea of an ocean of light, the idea of all-knowledge and all-bliss, should accompany the mental repetition of OM.

Formulae for Meditation

There are some *Upanishad* mantras which will help you to go near Brahman or God and to establish yourself in Him. They are formulae for vedanta meditation.

"**Atma antaryami amritam**" — this comes in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. "*This Atman is the immortal inner ruler.*" He rules the mind, the subconscious mind and the senses. The word '*antaryami*' takes you very near Brahman (makes you feel that Brahman is very close to you). He is not far, He is the inner ruler. You will have to constantly meditate on this formula which will destroy body consciousness. One all pervading Substance exists.

If you meditate on this formula again and again, it is quite sufficient for you to attain Self-realisation. You are not this perishable body. You are the immortal Atman, the inner Ruler.

The second formula comes in the *Kenopanishad*: "*Mind of minds, prana of pranas, ear of ears, eye of eyes.*" He is very close to you. 'Mind of mind' — He gives light to this mind. Mind borrows its light from the supreme light of lights, which is self-effulgent. 'Prana of pranas' — you live on account of prana, prana is life but the prana itself derives its power and energy from the Atman or Brahman. 'Ear of ears' — He makes the ear to hear. 'Eye of eyes' — He gives light to the eye. The eye sees on account of the light that it gets from the Self. Similar is the case of the other organs also. So, how close Brahman has come to you! Remember this formula. It will help you to attain Self-realisation quickly. Brahman is near to you and you are near Brahman.

The third formula is from the *Gurustotra*:

Brahmanandam paramasukhadam kevalam jnanamurtim
dvandvatitam gaganasadrisham tatvamasyadi lakshyam,

ekam nityam vimalamachalam sarvadhisakshibhutam
bhavatitam trigunarahitam satgurum tam namami.

I prostrate myself before that guru, the Existence, devoid of the three gunas, beyond comprehension, the witness of all mental functions, changeless and pure, one and eternal, transcending the pairs of opposites, expansive like the sky, reachable through the sentences like 'Thou art That', the bliss of Brahman, the giver of supreme happinesss, the mass of absolute wisdom.

'Sarvadhisakshibhutam' — He who is the witness of all intellects. The word 'sakshi' is a very significant term. He is the witness of the intellect, He is behind the intellect, He permeates the intellect, He is the all, He is the inter-penetrating Presence. '*Ekam nityam*' means one and eternal, '*vimalam*' — free from impurities, '*achalam*' — immovable. Where will He move? He is all-pervading. These are the terms on which you have constantly to meditate.

Brahman can be attained only through some formulae. The mind wants some prop to lean upon. The above formulae will help you to attain Self-realisation. They will bring you nearer to God and Brahman. Have a strong conviction.

The fourth formula is a little kirtan which we used to sing:

Dinabandhu dinanatha, vishvanatha he vibho
pahimam trahimam, prananatha he prabho.

'*Vibhu*' — He is the all-pervading Lord of the universe. '*Prananatha*' — He is the Lord of the pranas. He is the Lord of the mind. '*Vishvanatha*' — He is the Lord of the universe. This formula will also help you to remove all doubts and to attain Self-realisation quickly.

The following are wonderful formulae for devotees: 'Protect me.' 'Be pleased.' 'I take refuge in Lord Rama.' 'I take refuge in Lord Krishna.' They are formulae for effecting total ungrudging self-surrender.

Life is short, so we cannot master all the various kinds of scriptures. The essence of all the scriptures is contained in these few formulae. These are quite sufficient for attaining Self-realisation. Every formula has got unimaginable and infinite power; in fact all powers. You need not study the twelve classical *Upanishads*. If you meditate constantly on these formulae, negating the body, sublating all names and forms and taking out the existence-consciousness-bliss, you can attain realisation quickly. Therefore, let us not worry about the study of scriptures. What is wanted is constant enquiry and dispassion which will enable you to attain God-realisation easily. Even while you work, remember that you are the witness.

Remember this point well. Meditate on the above ideas and keep the bhava (inner feeling) during your work also. You can take up any one of the above formulae according to your taste. If the mind wanders, bring it back to the point again and again; or you can rotate the mind from one formula to another, and finally fix it on one formula alone, when the mind has become steady. The mind will now become like the steady flame of a lamp in a windless place. The one formula also will drop by itself. You will rest in your own essential nature, the thoughtless state of pure bliss. Samadhi or superconscious state will ensue now. Enjoy the bliss of the Atman. Rejoice in the inner immortal Self.

Meditation on Mahavakyas

Mahavakyas are the sacred sentences of the *Vedas*. They are four in number:

1. **Prajnanam Brahma** — *Consciousness is Brahman.*
2. **Aham Brahma asmi** — *I am Brahman.*
3. **Tat tvam asi** — *That thou art.*
4. **Ayam Atma Brahma** — *This Self is Brahman.*

The first is in the *Aitareya Upanishad* of the *Rig-veda*. The second is in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* of the *Yajur-veda*. The third is in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* of the *Sama-veda*. The fourth is in the *Mandukya Upanishad* of the *Atharva-veda*.

The first is a lakshana vakya (characteristic sentence) which gives a definition of Brahman and imparts tatbodha jnana (the knowledge of That). The second is an anubhava vakya (sentence of experience) that gives sakshi jnana (witness knowledge). The third is upadesha vakya (instruction) which bestows Siva jnana (auspiciousness, knowledge) — the guru instructs the disciple. The fourth is sakshatkara vakya (direct experience) which confers Brahma jnana (direct knowledge of Brahman). You can take any mahavakya and meditate on it as you do on OM.

When you meditate on 'Aham Brahma asmi' (I am Brahman) constantly feel that you are pure existence absolute, knowledge absolute, bliss absolute, all-pervading Brahman. Lip repetition will not produce much benefit. You must intensely feel from the subjective heart. Gradually you will be taken to the superconscious state through deep feeling.

Sit in your asana on a folded blanket. Face north or east and constantly feel:

1. Infinity I am.
2. Eternity I am.
3. Immortality I am.

Meditation on the mahavakyas is tantamount to meditation on OM. You can take either 'I am Brahman' or 'That thou art' mahavakya, and meditate on its significance. Deny, negate or throw out the sheaths of body, prana, mind, intellect and bliss and identify with the one essence that lies behind them.

Meditate. Purify your mind. Practise concentration in a solitary room. Then squeeze out the *Upanishads* and *Bhagavad Gita* from your heart. Do not depend upon imperfect commentaries. If you are sincere you will understand the real intention of the sages of the *Upanishads* and Lord Krishna, and you will know what they really meant when they uttered those wise verses.

Unfold the divinity that is lurking in your heart by concentration and meditation. Do not waste your time. Do not waste your life.

Positive Meditation

Meditate on the following ideas: 'I am the All' and 'I am all in all'. In this meditation the body and the world are taken as Brahman, as expressions of Brahman. They are included. It is highly preposterous to think that Brahman is by itself full of bliss and that which is expressed out of Brahman is full of misery, pain and sorrow. Pessimism should be shunned. It is the individual's creation that is at the bottom of all pain and misery. There is nothing wrong in God's creation. This does not give the least pain. On the contrary, it is desire, anger, the idea of mine, thine, 'I am the doer', etc. that causes all trouble. This is due to nescience which causes identification with the limited mind.

Repeat the above idea mentally at all times. Feel you are the All. Feel that your shakti (energy) is working in all bodies. Constantly dwell on these ideas: 'All bodies are mine.' 'All lives are mine.' 'All pains are mine.' 'The whole world is my body.' 'All joys are mine.' Jealousy, anger, hatred and egoism will all vanish. In the samadhi of positive meditation the jnani sees within himself the world as a movement of ideas. He is both saguna (with attributes) and nirguna (attributeless).

Negative Meditation

'I am not the body. I am not the mind. I am essentially existence, knowledge, bliss absolute (sat-chit-ananda svarupa).' Meditate on the above ideas constantly. Feel you are sat-chit-ananda always, all through the twenty-four hours. Negate the body idea. Incessant sadhana is necessary to remove the feeling 'I am the body', due to beginningless impressions. If you can go above body consciousness and can leave the body at will, three-fourths of your sadhana is over. Then there remains only the drawing of the curtain, the removal of the veil of ignorance. That can be done quite easily. Even when you move about, even when you are at work, always feel that you are the all-pervading, infinite Brahman. This is important. Thinking, concentration and effort to separate yourself from the body should go together. In negative meditation the jnani dwells in pure, attributeless Brahman. He has no consciousness of the world.

Nirguna Meditation

Nirguna means without gunas or attributes. It does not mean that Brahman is a perfect void, but that there are no such perishable qualities as the blue colour of a cloth, etc., in Brahman. Further there are no qualities and possession of qualities in Brahman. Brahman is the embodiment of infinite divine attributes. This is the significance of the term 'nirguna'. Brahman is bliss itself. Brahman is knowledge itself. Brahman is beauty itself. Brahman is light itself.

Even in nirguna meditation there is an abstract image in the beginning. For instance, meditation on ice and its qualities is concrete meditation, while meditation on oxygen and hydrogen is abstract meditation. Meditation on the physical form of your father is one form of concrete or saguna meditation, while meditation on the qualities of your father is abstract meditation. Meditation on a green leaf is one kind of concrete meditation, while meditation on green-*ness* is abstract meditation. Meditation on the void, on the blue sky, on the all-pervading light of the sun or an infinite ocean of light and on the formless air or all-pervading ether are all types of nirguna meditation.

Simple Nirguna Exercises

1: There is a living universal power that underlies all these names and forms. Meditate on this power which is formless. This will eventually terminate in the realisation of the absolute, quality-less, formless Consciousness.

2: Sit in padmasana with closed eyes. Concentrate steadily on the formless air. Meditate on the all-pervading nature of the air. This leads to the realisation of the nameless and formless Brahman, the one living Truth.

3: Sit in your meditative pose. Close your eyes. Imagine that there is a supreme, infinite effulgence hidden behind all these names and forms, which is tantamount to the effulgence of millions of suns put together. This is another form of formless meditation.

4: Concentrate and meditate on the expansive blue sky.

By these methods of concentration the mind will cease thinking of finite forms and will slowly begin to melt in the ocean of peace, as it is deprived of its contents. The mind will become subtler and subtler.

There are various other ways in nirguna meditation: laya chintana (concentration of the mind with a view to dissolve it) of OM, laya chintana of antahkarana (mind) and laya chintana of elements (progressive meditation from the gross to the subtle on OM, mind and elements); anvaya vyatireka method (the method of positive and negative assertions); neti-neti method (I am not body; I am not mind); the method of meditation on 'I am sat-chit-ananda Brahman' (existence, knowledge, bliss absolute) and 'I am sakshi' (the witness); adhyaropa-apavada method (method of rejecting the illusory superimposition of one thing on another, e.g. seeing a snake in a rope, and refutation); bhava-tyaga lakshana method (the method of abandoning the idea of the word meaning of 'Thou art That' and contemplating on what it means in essence); repetition of OM with its meaning, etc. and soham (I am He) meditation, which is associated with the breath and where the mind is fixed on the breath, etc..

Saguna and Nirguna Meditation Compared

Isa, Prasna, Katha, Tapaniya and other *Upanishads* elaborately treat the method of contemplation of Brahman as devoid of qualities. Badarayana in a chapter of the *Brahma Sutras* which deals with the nature of the qualities of Brahman, mentions positive attributes like 'joyful', 'intelligent', etc., as well as negative attributes like 'measureless', 'colourless', etc. Both kinds of attributes refer to the Absolute and yet the contemplation of such a Brahman can be called nirguna meditation or meditation on conditionless Brahman. The chief distinction between the contemplation of the conditioned (saguna) and the unconditioned (nirguna) Brahman is that in the former the devotee looks upon it as really connected with those attributes, while in the latter, positive and negative qualities are not viewed as essentially connected with it, but as suggesting its absolute nature. Hence, 'joyful', 'intelligent', etc., do not enter into the essence of the contemplated Brahman, but act as a gateway for grasping its true nature. In the contemplation of the conditioned Brahman, those and similar other properties form a part of the contemplation.

The term 'nirguna' does not mean that Brahman is a negative concept, or that Brahman is a non-entity or zero. It means that the qualities found here in limitation are found illimitably in Brahman. It means that the attributes are Brahman's essential nature and that Brahman does not possess perishable qualities of matter like the blue colour of a cloth, but possesses all auspicious qualities. Brahman is nirguno-guni (without and with attributes). It does not mean that Brahman is formless. It means 'He has not got a limited form as that of objects, but has an unimaginable form'. What form can you attribute to infinity? Many have a crude idea of Brahman. They say "Brahman is a block of stone because he has no qualities. He is a regular void, a zero." No. No. They are entirely mistaken. They have not made an enquiry into the nature of Truth. They have various doubts. They have a gross intellect which is unfit for philosophical investigation, discrimination, reflection, ratiocination, etc. They have not studied the infallible *Upanishads*, the right means of knowledge, the right source of wisdom which gives an accurate knowledge of Brahman. The *Upanishads* are infallible because they tally with the experiences of realisation and appeal to the reason of every thinker and philosopher. Their authority is more valid than that of perception or inference.

Brahman is extremely subtle. He is finer than a thousandth part of a point of a hair divided into a thousand parts. A subtle, calm, pure, sharp-pointed, clear and one-pointed intellect is needed for understanding and meditating on Brahman. Many people suffer from suspicion and doubts regarding the validity of the *Upanishads* and the true nature of Brahman. They should purify their minds by selfless service, study the *Upanishads*, develop the four-fold qualifications and have constant satsang. Then they will have an intellectual conviction and an intellectual grasp of Brahman. By hearing the scriptures and meditating on them and by deep meditation they can reach Brahman. This is the royal road. So, Brahman is full of auspicious qualities. He is a lump of luminosity. He is a solid mass of knowledge. He is really more solid than the Himalayas. Knowledge is more heavy and more concrete than a huge block of stone.

In saguna meditation the devotee considers himself as entirely different from the object of worship. The worshipper makes a total, unreserved, ungrudging self-surrender to the Lord. He respects, honours and adores the Lord and depends on Him for everything — for food, protection and his very existence. He looks always for help of any sort from the Lord. There is nothing independent for him. He is an instrument in the hands of the Lord. His hands, legs, senses, mind, intellect and physical body belong to the Lord. A devotee does not at all like the idea of merging as a jnani does. He likes to have his separate entity as a servant and to serve, worship and love the Lord always. He does not like to become sugar but likes to taste sugar and eat sugar, whereas the jnani becomes the sugar itself, as it were. This method of worship is one of contraction. Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You contract yourself to a point and merge in the point. This is saguna meditation. This is suitable for people of emotional temperament. The vast majority of persons are fit for this line of worship only.

In nirguna meditation the aspirant takes himself as Brahman. He denies and sublates the false adjuncts or fictitious environments as egoism, mind and body. He depends upon himself, he has absolute self-reliance. The aspirant asserts boldly. He reflects, reasons out, investigates, discriminates and meditates on the Self. He does not want to taste sugar but to become a solid mass of sugar itself. He wants merging. He likes to be identical with Brahman. This method is one of expansion of the lower self. Suppose there is a circle. You have a position in the centre. You expand by sadhana to a very great extent so that you occupy the whole circle, and envelop the circumference. This method of meditation is suitable for persons of fine intellect, bold understanding, strong and accurate reasoning and powerful will. Only a microscopic minority of persons are fit for this line of meditation.

It is comparatively easy to meditate on 'Aham Brahma asmi' (I am Brahman) when you are seated in a steady posture in a solitary closed room. But it is very very difficult to keep up this idea amidst crowded surroundings, while the body moves. If you meditate for one hour and feel that you are Brahman, and if for the remaining twenty-three hours you feel that you are the body, the sadhana cannot produce the desired result. So at all times you must try to keep up the idea that you are Brahman. This is very very important.

A worldly mind needs thorough overhauling and a complete psychological transformation. Concentration and meditation bring about the construction of a new mind, with a new mode of thinking. A contemplative life is diametrically opposite to worldly life. It is an entire change altogether. Old impressions of the world have to be thoroughly annihilated through constant and intense practice carried on with zeal for a long time, and thereby new spiritual samskaras (impressions) have to be created.

Meditation and Action

Man consists of Atman, mind and body. The Atman has two aspects, changeless and changing. The latter is called the world and the former God. World also is nothing but God in manifestation. God in movement is the world. It is not that the world does not exist, but it has a relative existence.

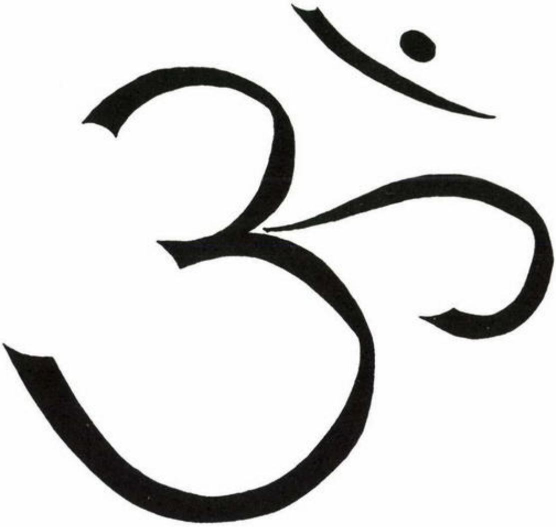
Atman is all-pervading, all bliss, all powerful, all knowledge, eternally perfect and pure. It assumes these names and forms, called the world, of its own free will. There is no desire, because there is no outside object. This will is called cosmic energy (shakti). It is Atman in action. In nirguna Atman, the cosmic energy is static. In saguna, it is dynamic. Atman has no desire, because it is perfect and because there is nothing which is objective to the Atman. Desire implies attraction, which presupposes imperfection. It is the very negation of will, which is the decision for action from within.

The Atman wills and the universe comes into being. The will of the Atman upholds and governs the universe. Human beings are driven hither and thither by egoism, desires and fears, due to identification with the limiting adjuncts of mind and body. This idea of limitation is called egoism.

The realisation of oneness with all existence, manifested and unmanifested, is the goal of human life. This unity already exists, but we have forgotten it through ignorance. The removal of this veil of ignorance — the idea that we are confined within the mind and the body — is our chief effort in sadhana. It logically follows that to realise unity we must give up diversity. We must constantly keep up the idea that we are all-pervading, all-powerful, etc. There is no room here for desire, because in unity there is no emotional attraction, but steady, persistent, calm, eternal bliss. Desire for liberation is a terminological inexactitude. Liberation means attainment of the state of infinity. It already exists. It is our real nature. There can be no desire for a thing which is already your very nature. All desires for progeny, wealth and happiness in this world or the next and even the desire for liberation, should be completely annihilated and all actions guided towards the goal by pure and disinterested will.

This sadhana — the constant attempt to feel that you are the all — can be practised (or rather ought to be practised) in the midst of intense activity. That is the central teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It stands to reason also, because God is both saguna and nirguna, with form and without form. Let the mind and the body work. Feel that you are above them, their controlling witness. Do not identify yourself with the support for body and mind even when it is employed in activity. Of course meditation, in the beginning, has to be resorted to. Only an exceptionally strong-willed man can dispense with it. For ordinary human beings it is an indispensable necessity. In meditation the support is steady, so the sadhana, the effort to feel unity, is comparatively easy. In the midst of activity this effort is difficult. Karma yoga is more difficult than pure jnana yoga. We must, however, keep up the practice at all times. That is absolutely essential, otherwise the progress is slow, because a few hours meditation on the idea that you are the All and then identification with the mind and body for a greater portion of the day, does not bring about rapid or substantial advance.

Meditation is the means, knowledge is the end. Meditation is the process, knowledge is the culmination. In meditation there is struggle, striving or effort. In knowledge there is no striving. So long as there is meditation the meditator is only an aspirant. When meditation ceases and the goal is reached, the meditator becomes the knower of Truth. All meditation and effort cease. He is a liberated sage. When you try to behold a tree there is an effort in the beginning of the perception. Later on it becomes a continuous stream of consciousness of the tree. So is the knowledge of Brahman. In the beginning there is effort, later on the aspirant merges in the object of meditation and there is no further struggle.



OM

PHILOSOPHY OF OM

The sacred syllable OM connotes Him (Ishvara). (1-27)

You will find in the *Bible*, "*In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.*" This is OM or the word of power. Volumes have been written in the sanskrit language on the significance of OM, the sacred and mysterious mono-syllable. Even Sarasvati (the goddess of learning) will not be able to exhaust the subject of this sacred mantra OM even if she has the waters of the oceans as ink and all the trees of the world as pens.

The pronunciation of the sacred word OM is one which has engaged the attention of all Europeans devoted to Eastern studies. The vibrations set up by the word are so powerful that if persisted in they would bring the largest building to the ground. This seems difficult to believe until one has tried to practise. Once having tried it one can easily understand how the above statement may be true and correct. I have tested the power of the vibrations and can quite believe that the effect would be as stated. Pronounced as spelt it will have a certain effect on the student, but pronounced in its correct method it arouses and transforms every atom in the physical body, setting up new vibrations and conditions, and awakening the sleeping power of the body.

This mysterious inscrutable force tears the veils and the sheaths, destroys vasanas, desire, cravings and egoism and takes the aspirant to Brahman. It raises the thought of Brahman alone to the exclusion of all other thoughts, annihilates the primal ignorance and helps the meditator to rest in his own essential nature of existence, knowledge, bliss aboslute.

OM is a magical, mysterious, divine, gramophonic record of all sounds and words. All words, all sounds and all languages proceed from OM. Therefore OM is the right representative or natural symbol or womb of all sounds and words.

Just as the president represents the voice of the people of a country, so also OM represents the voice of all names of God, because it is the substratum or matrix or the basis for all sounds, names or words. In OM all sounds are included. OM is the king of all sounds. OM is the ocean into which all rivers of sounds flow.

Where it is Heard

The sound produced in the flowing Ganges, the sound that is heard at a distance and that which proceeds from the bustle of a market, the sound that is produced when the fly-wheel of an engine is set in motion, the sound that is caused when it rains, the sound that is produced when there is a conflagration of fire or when there is thunder, are all OM only. Split any word and you will find OM there. OM is all-pervading like akasha (space), like Brahman.

The humming of bees, the sweet melody of the nightingale, the seven notes in music (sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni), the sound of the mridanga (drum) and kettle-drum, the lute and the flute, the roaring of the lion, the singing of the lover, the neighing of horses, the hissing of the cobra and the clapping of the audience when a orator delivers his oration are all emanations from OM only.

The gurgling sounds produced in the bowels on account of flatulence, the whistling sound of the railway engine, the murmur of the running brooks, the sound of thunder, the howling of jackals, the sound of the mills and the factories, the sound of landslides, the heavy rush of wind, are all OM only.

When you experience acute agony or pain you utter the long sound of 'hun' or 'hum' again and again and get some relief. 'Hun' or 'hum' is a modification of OM only. 'Hum' is partial utterance of OM which breaks on account of pain. When you suffer from pain you implore the mercy of the Lord by calling Him by His name. Laughter is nothing but a sound of many 'huns' repeatedly made.

When a child cries or weeps, it utters 'un' or 'aung'. 'Un' or 'aung' is a modification of OM only. As the child's organ of speech is not well-developed it utters OM unintelligently, so even when the child weeps it repeats God's name. When the washerman washes his clothes he utters 'hung' repeatedly. This gives him relief. He does not feel exhaustion or fatigue. He unconsciously repeats God's name and derives power, joy, peace and strength from within. You will clearly understand now that man utters OM, the name of the Lord or Brahman, fully or partially, consciously or unconsciously, at all times. If he utters it with feeling he will quickly realise his own essential divine nature.

OM is the voice of all creation. It is the cosmic sound, the primal sound of the universe. It is the priceless treasure of a student on the path of jnana yoga and the pass-word of the vedantins. OM is the passport for those who are sailing in the boat of knowledge of the Self to reach the other shore of fearlessness and immortality, which is Brahman.

OM is the soul of souls, the height of heights. It is the panacea for the destruction of sins and the dire disease of death and the celestial ambrosia that confers immortality. Meditate on OM. Have a dip in OM, plunge in OM. This is the most sacred bath that will quench the fire of samsara (worldly existence).

OM represents the canvas or the background. The forms of this universe represent the pictures on the canvas. The canvas is real, but the picture on the canvas is unreal because fire on the canvas cannot burn your fingers, the knife on the canvas cannot cut your fingers and the tiger on the canvas cannot bite you. Even so, OM or Brahman is the only solid reality. The names and forms are unreal like the pictures on the canvas.

OM or the real Atman is the substratum for all sounds, languages, this universe, body, mind, prana and senses, the causal body and the five sheaths. Just as the substratum is a fundamental element, or the substance in which qualities exist, so also OM is the substratum or the underlying reality in which all objects appear as waves in the ocean. The waves are mere appearances. So also the forms are mere appearances. The forms are unreal in the sense that they are only relatively real, that they are changing and impermanent. The ocean is real. So also OM or Brahman is real.

That place where there is neither hunger nor thirst, neither sorrow nor pain, neither 'you' nor 'he', neither 'this' nor 'that', neither 'here' nor 'there', neither 'yesterday' nor 'tomorrow', neither 'East' nor 'West', neither 'sound' nor 'colour', neither 'light' nor 'darkness', neither 'seer' nor 'seen', is OM.

That imperishable Brahman; that seat of ineffable splendour; that indefinable, inexhaustible, illimitable Essence which pervades the whole universe; that which is called continuum or residuum or noumenon by Western philosophers; that place where all speech stops, all thoughts cease and where the function of the intellect and all organs stop, is OM.

OM is the essence of the *Vedas* or vedanta; it is the highest flower of the tree of the *Upanishads* and the root of the entire universe. OM is ever-lasting Brahman; it is the real name of Brahman. OM is the symbolic representation of Brahman or the immortal Self, it is the word of power, the pranava, the sacred monosyllable of the *Vedas*.

OM is the spirit, substratum or essence. It is the immortal Soul, the Holy Ghost. OM is the inner music of the soul, it is the music of the silence.

All *Upanishads* and all mantras begin with OM. All religious ideas are centred in OM. The breath always sings OM, the song of infinity and immortality. Thought of OM elevates the minds of all. The Christians and the Hebrews end their prayers with 'Amen', a modification of OM, while the Muslims end their prayers with 'Ahmeen', also the modification of OM. The *Mandukya Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad, Chhandogya Upanishad, Prashnopanishad, Kathopanishad, Bhagavad Gita* and *Brahma Sutras*, sing the glory of OM.

All the sacred scriptures of the Hindus are contained in OM. OM is the womb for everything. This world has come out of OM, exists in OM and dissolves in OM during the cosmic dissolution. The creation itself is set in motion by the vibration of OM.

OM is your very life, your very breath. OM is the life of the *Vedas* and the life of all mantras. It is the basis of this world, it is everything. OM is a common mantra. It is the common property of all. All various significances are centred in OM. OM is used in the invoking or addressing in prayer and supplication. It is the formula of imperative prayer which transmits a certain grace or virtue to the person over whom it is pronounced. It should be accepted by everyone. Even Americans and Europeans meditate on OM now that they have realised its importance.

Just as the rope is the substratum of the snake, just as Brahman is the substratum of prana, mind, senses and the body, so also is OM the substratum or cause of the whole of the illusion of speech. The scriptures declare: "*All is mere play of words.*" "*All is held together throughout by the string of speech or even by the cord of specific names.*" "*All is rendered possible in experience only by words.*" Nothing can exist apart from words. Names and forms are inseparable, thought and language are inseparable. All effects are nothing but mere names. This whole phenomenal world of experience can never exist without names. All objects are to be named. You have to call a man by his name. Although there is nothing but Brahman, you cannot say, "Brahman, Brahman, Brahman, Brahman," when you wish to say, "Govind! Give me water". Names cannot exist apart from OM. Hence, the whole world has come from OM, rests in Om and dissolves in OM. Therefore worship Om, live in OM, meditate on OM, merge in Om, rejoice in Om.

OM is an auspicious trade mark of sannyasins and vedantins whose aim is dissemination of spiritual knowledge to the world at large. It is written on the front wall of every ashram of a sannyasin. Votaries of OM write OM first before they start to write a letter.

There is what is called the Pancha-shanti, five kinds of incantations, each ending with the word 'shantih' or 'peace'. Before each 'shantih' there is the word 'OM'. As such OM gives peace, calmness, tranquillity, serenity and so on. This symbol contains the entire universe and all its contents in its span; it includes everything we can imagine and something more too. As such, it is a fit symbol to be meditated upon. No other symbol can span so much in its embrace. Such is the glory of OM.

By holding the flute in his hands Lord Krishna teaches its symbolic philosophy. Flute is the symbol of OM. He says: "Empty your egoism. I will play in your body-flute. Let your will become one with My will. Take refuge in OM. You will enter into My being. Hear the inner soul-stirring music of the soul and rest in everlasting peace."

OM as Brahman

Para Brahman, that eternal highest Being, the abiding place of all that lives and moves, is beyond name and class. The *Vedas* have ventured to give a name to Him, in order that man may recognise and call Him. A new-born child has no name, but on receiving one he will answer to it. Men who are troubled by the afflictions of the world run to a deity for refuge, and call Him by name. When Brahman is invoked through the name, that which is hidden is revealed to the aspirant.

OM is the emblem of Brahman, as images are of material objects. By its application (chanting) He becomes propitiated, as men by the use of their favourite names. When you hear the sound 'tree', you at once understand that it has a root, stem, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Similarly, when you hear the sound OM it denotes sat-chid-ananda Brahman — existence Absolute, knowledge Absolute, bliss Absolute. Sound and meaning are inseparable.

All colours are centred in the eye, all tastes are centred in the tongue, all touch is centred in the skin, all sounds are centred in the ear, all scents are centred in the nose, all senses are centred in the mind and all minds are centred in OM or Brahman or the Supreme Self, the support for everything.

Why is OM taken as the symbol of Brahman? Can we not have any other word besides OM to represent Brahman or the solid Reality or living Truth? OM is a mysterious sacred syllable. Chant OM for one hour and then chant any other word also for one hour. You will yourself feel the difference. There is a real connection, an intimate relationship between OM the symbol and Brahman the thing signified by the symbol. Thought and word are inseparable. OM and Brahman are inseparable. When you think of the name of your son Govinda the name will bring to your memory the picture or image of your son; when you think of the image of OM the image will bring to your memory Brahman, the thing signified.

Rishis and sages of yore who have attained Self-realisation have experienced the mysterious effects of the repetition or chanting of OM. They have made long research and experiments on OM and its vibrations, they have meditated on OM for a considerable period and then they have given OM to the world as the right symbol of Brahman. This is not a hocus-pocus or a juggler's trick. This is the authoritative assertion of the seers. OM served as a beacon-light or light-house or a safe boat for them when they sailed in the turbulent and deep unnavigable waters of this ocean of samsara. Through OM they ascended safely to the summit of the hill of nirvikalpa samadhi, knowledge of the Self or Brahmajnana. You can safely rely on their teachings.

OM is the common symbol. It will represent all symbols of God, all symbols of religions, all cults and schools. Just as a large-hearted spiritual man who is of catholic, liberal nature without prejudice of any sort, represents all and becomes the supreme head of a conference of world religions, so also the common symbol OM, the basis of all sounds and all languages, represents all names and becomes the head of all names of God. Therefore it is quite proper to regard OM as the symbol or name of Brahman, the source of everything.

O Ram, you are now living in the Himalayas. Be in tune with nature's Lord. The lofty peaks will whisper to you the secrets of life eternal. The gurgling streams around you will sing the song of OM to you. Fix your mind on OM and enter into sublime communion easily. Nature will reveal to you her closely guarded secrets. Take lessons from Her. Feel your unity or oneness with the snow-clad peaks, the glaciers, the refreshing Himalayan breeze, the rays of the sun, the blue sky, the glittering stars, etc.

May you all rest in the non-dual Brahman and taste the nectar of immortality. May you all reach the fourth state of bliss (turiya) by analysing the experiences of waking, dream and deep sleep states. May you all have a comprehensive understanding of OM. May you all meditate on OM and attain the goal of life — the ultimate Reality, existence, knowledge, bliss absolute. May this OM guide you. May this OM be your centre, ideal and goal. May the secret and truth of the *Mandukya Upanishad* be revealed to you! May the blessings of Gaudapada, Sankara and the seer of Mandukya Upanishad be upon you. OM OM OM.

Japa of OM

> *Its repetition and its meditation with meaning should be practised.* (I-28)

Japa is repetition of a mantra. The aspirant gets one-pointed mind by japa of OM. The veil of ignorance and tossing of the mind slowly vanish.

Japa is of three kinds: verbal, when the japa is done loudly;

semi-verbal, when the japa is done in a whisper or humming tone; and mental, when the japa is done through the mind without moving the lips. The fruits of semi-verbal japa are a thousand times more powerful than the verbal japa, while the fruits of mental japa are a thousand times more powerful than the semi-verbal japa. Mental japa can be kept up even during work. It continues automatically during sleep also, through force of habit. Beginners should do verbal and semi-verbal japa.

The significance of OM must be remembered during japa. This is very very important. The relation of the word and its meaning is eternal. The mind of the yogi who constantly repeats OM and habituates the mind to the constant remembrance of the idea it carries, becomes one-pointed. The mind feels bliss in the one Lord alone. God showers His blessings on him and he gets the fruit of samadhi and liberation. You must make the feeling or the understanding of the significance of OM enter the mind over and over again by constant practice, until it becomes part and parcel or the very substance of the mental existence. The japa of OM should always be accompanied by meditation on Ishvara. (Mere parrot-like repetition or gramophonic repetition will not produce the maximum benefits.)

OM is a good companion for the mind. Just as soap washes cloth, so also OM washes the impurities of the mind. For instance, if you eat oranges twelve times, the force of samskara and desire is increased in the mind. The greater the force of the samskara the greater the force of the desire for orange. Repetition strengthens the force of habit. By constant repetition of OM or any other mantra the force of spiritual samskaras is increased. This is a great asset for you in the spiritual path. It will not allow the mind to run into the old grooves of desire for sensual things. Japa makes the mind inward and removes all physical and mental obstacles. As OM and Ishvara are inseparable, fixing the mind on OM means the fixing of the mind on Ishvara. Doing japa of OM is the remembrance of Ishvara.

Meditation on OM

> *Thence comes the cognition of the individual soul and also the removal of the obstacles.* (I-29)

Through the grace of Ishvara, the yogi will not get any disease. The divine grace will descend when one repeats OM and meditates on its meaning with concentration.

The sannyasins are ordained to meditate on OM. They have already reached a high stage, and meditation on OM raises them further till ultimately they become paramahamsas.

The goal can only be attained through meditation on this mystic symbol of OM. Meditation on OM is the only real, royal road to the attainment of salvation. Meditation kills all pains, sufferings and sorrows and destroys all causes of sorrow. It gives the vision of unity and induces a sense of oneness. Meditation is a balloon or an aeroplane that helps the aspirant to soar high into the realms of eternal bliss, everlasting peace and undying joy.

Those who have a subtle intellect, bold understanding, strong will, courage, self-reliance, purity of heart, one-pointedness of mind, the four means of salvation and ability are fit to take up this meditation.

OM is the ladder which takes the aspirant to the loftier levels of superconsciousness or spiritual heights of splendour and glory. Meditation on OM will reveal to you the laws of the higher planes and the spiritual laws. Meditation on OM will give you liberation, immortality, courage, inner spiritual strength, supreme peace, penetrative insight and change your very being. It will transmute you into a jivanmukta or a liberated sage.

Meditation Exercises

1: Have a picture of OM in front of you in your meditation room. Concentrate on this picture. Do tratak with open eyes (steady gazing without winking till tears flow profusely). Then visualise OM with closed eyes by calling up a clear mental image of OM. Repeat OM mentally with feeling and meaning and make the ears hear the sound also so that they may not hear other sounds outside. Meditation on OM with feeling and meaning leads to realisation of Self. This is vedantic sadhana, this is jnana yoga.

2: Associate ideas of infinity, eternity, immortality etc. when you think of OM. This is both saguna and nirguna meditation, with and without attributes. Keep a picture of OM always before your mind and worship it. Burn incense and camphor. Offer flowers. This is suitable for modern educated people. It is a combined method of bhakti and jnana.

3: You can associate OM with the breath during the practice of pranayama. This will increase the efficacy of pranayama. Watch the breath and repeat 'O' during the inspiration and 'M' during expiration. You can do this practice while walking also. Put sufficient force into the thoughts of OM. Feel that OM is coming from your soul. This will raise your consciousness to a very high plane. You will become one with Atman.

4: Repeat OM mentally. Keep the meaning of OM always in the mind. Feel that you are the all-pervading, infinite Light. Feel that you are the pure existence-knowledge-bliss absolute, all-pervading Atman — the eternally pure, eternally free Brahman. Feel you are consciousness. Feel that you are the indivisible, all-full, homogeneous, peaceful, infinite, eternal, unchanging Existence. Every atom, every molecule, every nerve, vein and artery should powerfully vibrate with these ideas. Your heart, head and soul should feel that you are the subtle, all-pervading intelligence. This feeling should be kept up continuously.

Negate the body idea when you repeat OM mentally. When you chant OM feel:

> Infinity am I. OM OM OM
> All Light am I. OM OM OM
> All Joy am I. OM OM OM
> All Glory am I. OM OM OM
> All Power am I. OM OM OM
> All Knowledge am I. OM OM OM
> All Bliss am I. OM OM OM

5:.Meditate on OM as silence, as an embodiment of peace. Feel: "I am an embodiment of peace or silence." This is abstract or subtle meditation. It is vedantic nirguna meditation (or ahamgraha upasana). Meditate on OM as an embodiment of bliss. Feel: "I am an embodiment of bliss." This is also abstract meditation. Do you see clearly the difference now between the two forms of meditation — one on OM and the other on 'I'? The first kind of meditation will prepare you for the practice of the second kind of meditation.

Meditate that the single letter, the supreme light — the pranava OM — is the origin or source of the three letters, A, U and M. Inhale the air through ida or left nostril for the space of sixteen matras, meditate on the letter A during that time; retain the air for the space of 64 matras, meditate on the letter U during that time; exhale for the space of 32 matras and meditate on the letter M during that time. Practise this again and again in the above order. Begin with two or three times and gradually increase the number to twenty or thirty times according to your capacity and strength. To begin with, keep the ratio 1:4:2. Gradually increase the ratio to 16:64:32. The practitioner will get great peace of mind and inner strength. Kundalini will be awakened. He will soon enter into nirvikalpa samadhi.

Association with OM is to become one with the thing signified. Try to identify yourself with the all-blissful Self when you think or meditate or chant OM, and negate the five sheaths as illusory adjuncts created by illusion.

Shut out all mundane thoughts. They may again and again recur. Again and again generate thoughts of the pure Self. Associate ideas of purity, perfection, freedom, knowledge, immortality, eternity, infinity, etc., with OM. Repeat OM mentally. This is the meaning. During meditation you should feel that you are all purity, all light, all-pervading existence, etc. Meditate on the Self daily. Think you are different from mind and body. Feel: 'I am all-pervading consciousness.' Constant effort with zeal and enthusiasm is indispensable. Repeat mentally the above ideas incessantly. Meditate on OM till you attain samadhi. If your mind gets distracted by rajas and tamas, practise concentration and meditation again and again.

"*Having made one's body or the lower self the lower fire stick, and pranava (OM) the upper, by the friction of continued practice of meditation one should see God (Atman) hidden within.*" *(Svetashvatara Upanishad)*·

OM (pranava) is a ferry-boat for men who have fallen into the never-ending ocean of mundane life. Many have crossed this ocean of samsara with the help of this ferry-boat. You can also do so if you will meditate constantly on OM with meaning.

Enter the ship of OM. Start the propeller, the current of Brahma bhavana (I am Brahman, I am the immortal, all-pervading Self). Sail smoothly in the ocean of samsara with the help of constant meditation. Have the anchor of discrimination. Whenever the tempest of desires blows vehemently, whenever there is the fear of the ship being shattered by the iceberg of worldly infatuation, get ready to wear the lifebelt of enquiry into the nature of the Self and land safely in the marvellous city of existence, knowledge, bliss Absolute.

Meditation on Soham

'Soham' means 'He I am' or 'I am He', 'I am Brahman'. 'Sa' means 'he'. 'Aham' means 'I'. This is the greatest of all mantras. This is the mantra of paramahamsa sannyasins. This signifies the identity of the individual soul and Brahman, the Supreme Self.

Soham is only OM. Delete the consonants 's' and 'h'. You get OM. Soham is modified OM. Some like 'soham' better than 'OM', because they find it convenient and easy to associate it or mix it with the breath. Further, there is no effort in doing japa of this mantra. The natural breath remains one with this mantra. If you simply concentrate on the breath, if you simply watch the breath, that is quite sufficient.

Meditation on 'soham' is the same as meditation on OM. Some repeat the compound mantra 'hamsah soham, soham hamsah' — 'I am He; He am I'. Before you practise meditation on 'soham', you must practise the neti-neti (not this, not this) doctrine. You must negate or deny the body and the other sheaths by repeating "I am not this body, mind or prana. I am He, I am He. Soham, soham."

Repeat this mantra mentally. You should feel with all your heart and soul that you are the all-pervading omnipotent, all-blissful Brahman. This is important. Then only will the full benefits of meditation or japa of this mantra be realised by you. Mere mechanical repetition will not help you much. It has its own benefits — but maximum benefits can only be realised in feeling. Feeling is Self-realisation.

If the intellect tries to feel, 'I am Brahman, I am omnipotent' and the sub-conscious chitta tries to feel, 'I am a clerk in the chief Court; I am weak; I am helpless. What shall I do for money for my daughter's marriage? I am afraid the judge will fine me', realisation is not possible. You must destroy all wrong impressions, all false imaginations, all weaknesses, all superstitions and all vain fears. Even if you are in the jaws of a tiger you must powerfully roar "Soham, soham, soham, I am not this body". Then only are you a real vedantin. Even if you have nothing to eat, even if you are in the roll of unemployment, you must say with great force and power, "Soham, soham". You have been spoiled by the mind and by ignorance. It is they that have brought you to this limitation through identification with this body. Pierce the veil of ignorance. Tear the five sheaths. Remove the curtain of nescience, which is a great nuisance. Rest in your own essential state of existence, knowledge, bliss Absolute through the force of meditation on 'soham' mantra.

The jiva or the individual soul is repeating this mantra 21,600 times within twenty-four hours. Even during sleep the soham-repetition goes on by itself. Watch the breath very carefully and you will know this. When you inhale, the sound 'so' is produced. When you exhale, 'ham' is produced. This is termed ajapa-japa because it is done without moving the lips along with the breath. Repeat 'so' mentally when you inhale, 'ham' mentally when you exhale. Practise this for two hours in the morning and evening. If you can repeat for ten hours, it is all the better. Study *Hamsa Upanishad*.

The repetition of the compound mantra 'hamsah soham — soham hamsah', creates a very deep impression. The late famous Sri Seshadri Swami of Tirunvannamalai used to meditate on this compound mantra. Even when he moved alone in the streets and bazaar, he repeated it. We say 'God is love, love is God.' Similarly, repetition of 'hamsah soham — soham hamsah' intensifies the force of the mantra. The aspirant gets more internal strength from the Atman. His conviction grows stronger. This sort of repetition corresponds to the repetition of the mahavakya, 'Aham Brahma asmi', 'Brahmaivahamasmi', 'I am Brahman, Brahman am I'.

'Analhaq' of the sufi-fakirs corresponds to soham of the paramahamsa-sannyasins. Guru Nanak highly extolled this mantra.

You must practise meditation for full twenty-four hours when you advance on the path. You will find real rest during meditation. There is no necessity for sleep

Your duration of life is counted really by so many 'soham' breaths in the light of yoga. It is not really made up of so many years. By the practice of pranayama, you save the soham-breaths and thus can prolong your life.

In the beginning of your practice simply watch the breath every now and then. Meditate on soham for one hour in a closed room with feeling and meaning. You can watch the breath with silent soham-repetition while sitting, standing, eating, talking, bathing, etc. This is an easy method of concentration.

Soham is the breath of life. OM is the Soul of breath. If you concentrate on the breath you will notice that the breath is gradually becoming very, very slow when concentration becomes deep. Gradually the repetition of 'soham' will drop when there is deep concentration. The mind will become very calm. You will enjoy. Ultimately you will become one with the Supreme Self.

Benefits of Chanting OM

Brahman is compared to the swan Hamsa. An adept in yoga who bestrides the swan — i.e. contemplates on OM — is not affected by influences of karma or by tens of millions of sins. Whoever does japa of this mantra in the morning, destroys the sins committed during the day. Whosoever recites OM morning and evening becomes free from the sins, however sinful he may be. He derives the good effects of the recitation of all the *Vedas*.

When a sacrificial rite or the like is found defective, it will be rendered perfect by the utterance of this powerful mantra 'OM' at the end. With OM all acts of sacrifice, study of sacred scriptures, spiritual discipline and meditation are commenced. If the doer of sacrifices remembers OM, all obstacles that stand in the way of success of the sacrifices are removed.

You already know that radio waves travel seven times throughout the whole world in one second. Mysterious indeed! Have you ever thought of this? Have you ever thought of the efficacy of the vibrations of this mysterious chanting of OM? The vibrations of this OM chanting have travelled throughout the world and have brought solace to those depressed, sad persons who are filled with gloom and despair. It has given strength to many unselfish workers in the world. It has infused a new spiritual life, vigour and vitality in the very hearts of enthusiastic youths, the future hope of India, a glory and blessing to the world at large. It has a great deal changed the vicious impressions that are embedded in the sub-conscious mind of one and all.

Whenever you feel depressed, whenever you get a little headache, take a brisk walk and chant OM while walking. While chanting OM feel that your entire being is filled with divine energy. Chanting OM is a potent, easily available tonic and specific for all diseases. It is a panacea or sovereign remedy for all ailments. Try this prescription yourself and feel the miraculous effects of this divine medicine. Just as you take medicine twice or thrice, take recourse to chanting of OM twice or thrice. Brahman or Atman is one with OM. Chanting of OM means going near to the source and tapping the cosmic energy which is inexhaustible. When you chant OM, feel: "All health am I". All pathogenic or disease-causing germs are destroyed or burnt by the vibrations of OM. You can chant OM while sitting on any comfortable seat in your room for the purpose of regaining, maintaining or improving your health.

Drive out evil thoughts by chanting OM. Draw inspiration, power and strength by singing OM. Get one-pointedness of mind by doing japa of OM. Melt the mind in Brahman by meditating on OM and rest in your own essential nature.

Such is the greatness and glory of OM, the name or symbol of Brahman. If you put unshakable faith in the glory of this name you will be freed from the bondage of births and deaths. If you perform any action with the utterance of OM in the beginning, middle and end, you will attain perfection and success in the action.

May that OM guide you, protect you, elevate you, take you to the goal and free you from the round of births and deaths.

PRACTICE OF SAMYAMA

The three (dharana, dhyana and samadhi) together constitute samyama. (III-4)

Samyama is the name given to the combined practice of dharana, dhyana and samadhi at one and the same time. These three constitute the internal (antaranga) sadhana of raja yoga, along with pratyahara. The first four — yama, niyama, asana and pranayama — are the external sadhana. Real raja yoga commences with pratyahara, with the internal sadhana. Samyama constitutes the actual practice of raja yoga. Dharana, dhyana and samadhi directly bring samadhi, while yama, niyama, asana, pranayama and pratyahara purify the body, prana and senses.

By the conquest of samyama comes the stage of cognition. As samyama becomes firmer and firmer, so does the knowledge of samadhi become more and more clear — this is the fruit of the practice of samyama. Samyama should become very natural, then knowledge flashes. Samyama is a powerful weapon for the yogi. Just as the archer aims at the gross objects first and then takes to subtle objects, so also the yogi does samyama on gross objects and then takes to subtle objects. He does a great deal of practise and ascends the yoga ladder rung by rung.

Through the practice of samyama you can enter into the truth about the thing meditated upon. You can come face to face with the real nature of things. You can get various siddhis and psychic faculties.

By doing samyama on the sun the yogi gets knowledge of the worlds. Samyama on the moon gives him knowledge of the stellar system. Samyama on the pole star reveals to him the truth about the movement of the stars. The yogi gets the strength of an elephant if he does samyama on an elephant. By practising samyama on his own body, he is able to dematerialise the physical body and move about invisibly.

By samyama on the signs (of others), comes the knowledge of their minds. By samyama on the relation of the ear and ether, comes divine hearing. By samyama on the relation between ether and the body, the yogi, attaining the lightness of cotton, attains the power of passage through ether (air).

By samyama and direct perception of the samskaras, (impressions and tendencies) comes the knowledge of previous births. By samyama on the distinctive relation between sattva (purity) and Purusha (soul) comes the powers of omnipotence and omniscience.

By samyama on the chakra (plexus) of the navel, comes the knowledge of the body. By samyama on the chakra at the pit of the throat, comes the removal of hunger and thirst. By samyama on the light of the head, comes the darshan of siddhas.

Only one more samyama I would particularly mention and ask you to practise. That is samyama on virtues like love, friendliness, etc. Then you will be able to radiate these virtues and thereby transform others by infusing these virtues into them.

Samyama on the innermost self is the goal of the practice of raja yoga. All other samyamas will only give you some siddhis which will pave the way to your downfall. Beware of them. Proceed cautiously along the path to the goal. Meditate on the Self. Enter into samadhi. Attain Atma-jnana.

OBSTACLES

Obstacles in Meditation

> *Disease, dullness, doubt, carelessness, laziness, indolence, worldly-mindedness or sensuality, mistaken notion or illusion, missing the point, instability causing distractions of the mind; these are the obstacles.* (I-30)

An intelligent and comprehensive understanding of the various obstacles that act as stumbling blocks in meditation is indispensable. Then alone will the aspirant find it easy to conquer them one by one. Just as the sailor sails in and out of a harbour along a dangerous coast with the help of a pilot, so also the aspirant with the help of a detailed knowledge of these obstacles and the methods to conquer them will be able to steer clearly in the ocean of spirituality. Hence, I will give a very lucid exposition of the various obstacles and the effective methods to conquer them.

The real and serious obstacles to meditation are from within only. They do not come from outside.

Attachment to objects, dullness of intellect or understanding, ill-directed argument leading to misinterpretation of texts and clinging obstinately to the belief that the Atman is susceptible to suffering grief and enjoying happiness, are obstacles in meditation. Any one of these is quite sufficient to interfere with the attainment of real knowledge. Therefore, cultivate dispassion, sharpen the intellect and give up perverted logic. Identify yourself with the pure Atman.

If you are careless and non-vigilant, if you are irregular in meditation, if your dispassion wanes, if you yield even a bit to sensual pleasure, the mind will continue to go downward like a ball dropped upon a flight of stairs. When sedge is displaced on the surface of a lake, it closes in again at once; even so, the world closes in even upon a wise man if he stops his meditation and sadhana even for a short time.

Just as water leaks out into the rat holes in agricultural fields, so also energy is wasted in wrong channels through attraction for objects, under-currents and lurking subtle desires. Suppressed desires also will manifest and harass you. You will unconsciously become a victim of those desires. Therefore, be careful, be alert, be regular in your meditation.

Scents, soft beds, novel reading, dramas, theatres, cinemas, vulgar music, dancing, flowers, company of women and rajasic diet all excite passion and cause disturbance of the mind. Too much salt, too many chillies and too many sweets cause intense thirst and disturb meditation. Too much talking, too much walking, too much work and too much mixing disturb the mind in meditation.

Dullness is indisposition of the mind to work. In a state of dullness a person is unfit to do any practice on account of inexperience in the line and the lack of tendencies (samskaras) of previous births. Dullness, laziness, etc., can be eradicated by pranayama, asana and active habits. Doubt is whether it is this or that; such indecisive notion is doubt. The yogi is not able to proceed further in the path of yoga. He will doubt whether all that is said in the yoga scriptures is true or not. This can be dispelled by right knowledge, discrimination and right thinking, study of scriptures and by the company of spiritually advanced souls. Worldly-mindedness is that tendency of the mind which unceasingly longs keenly for one or the other kind of sensual enjoyment on account of attachment. This is destroyed by looking into the faults of worldly objects and worldly life (such as impermanence, disease, death, old age, miseries, etc.) by constant company of dispassionate mahatmas (satsang) and study of books on dispassion.

Mistaken notion or illusion is mistaking an undesirable state for the most desirable one, due to illusion. This is also removed by the company of yogis. Missing the point is going astray from the right path to samadhi and falling into the clutches of siddhis. Missing the point and instability are removed by developing more dispassion and doing constant and intense sadhana in seclusion. Instability is that fickleness of the mind which does not allow the yogi to remain in the state of samadhi, even though he has reached it with great difficulty. Maya is powerful. There is many a slip between the cup and lip. (These obstacles do not come to those who do japa of OM.)

When slight difficulties appear, do not stop the practice. Find out suitable means to eradicate the obstacles. Plod on till you get the highest asamprajnata samadhi. Success is bound to come if you are sincere and steady in your practice.

Know things in their proper light. Do not be deluded. Emotion is mistaken for devotion; violent jumping in the air during group chanting for divine ecstasy; falling down in a swoon on account of exhaustion from too much jumping, for bhava samadhi (superconscious state attained through intense divine emotion); rajasic restlessness and motion for divine activities and karma yoga. A tamasic man is mistaken for a sattvic man; movement of air in rheumatism in the back for ascent of kundalini; deep sleep for samadhi; building castles in the air for meditation and physical nudity for jivanmukta state. Learn to discriminate and become wise.

Vikshepa is tossing or oscillation of the mind. This is an age-old habit of the mind. This is distraction of the mind. All seekers generally complain of this trouble. The mind never stays at a fixed point for a long time. It jumps hither and thither like a monkey. It is always restless. This is due to the force of rajas. Tratak, meditation, chanting of OM and pranayama will remove tossing of the mind. It is better to have a combined method. This will be more effective.

When you take your seat for meditation you want to get up soon, not on account of pain in the legs, but on account of impatience. Conquer this undesirable negative quality by gradually developing patience. Then you will be able to sit for three or four hours at a stretch.

A weak aspirant, though he may be strong in concentration, is overcome by idleness; but a strong aspirant, if he is weak in concentration, is over-powered by tossing of mind. Concentration and energy should, therefore, be well-balanced.

Meditate, meditate. Concentrate, concentrate, my dear friends. Never miss even a single day owing to laziness. Life is short, time is fleeting and obstacles are many on the spiritual path.

Conquer them one by one by exertion and prayer. If you are sincere you will succeed.

(a) Physical Obstacles

Disease is the first obstacle in yoga. Diseases are generated in the body through sleeping in the daytime, late overnight vigils, excessive sexual intercourse, moving in crowds, checking of the urine and excreta, laborious mental work, lack of regular exercise, irregularity in taking food and unwholesome food that cannot agree with the system.

Diseases can be removed by the practice of asana, pranayama and physical exercises, meditation, dietetic adjustment, fasting, purgatives, enema, bath, sun-treatment, sufficient rest, etc. First diagnose the case and find out the cause for the disease and then try for a remedy; or consult a doctor.

If the yoga student develops some diseases on account of his failure in observing the laws of health and indiscretion, and says that his disease has arisen from the practice of yoga, this is the first obstacle.

Laziness and fickleness of mind are two great obstacles in meditation. Light sattvic diet and the practice of pranayama will remove laziness. Do not overload the stomach. Walk briskly in your compound hither and thither for half an hour. As soon as you have made a firm resolve, you must carry it out promptly at any cost. This will remove fickleness of mind and develop your will-power.

The mind does two things: it ceaselessly thinks of sensual objects, and when it is tired of thinking of objects it goes to sleep and rests in the primal nescience. If sleep tries to overpower you during meditation, be on the alert, awaken the mind by the practise of chanting, japa and long OM chanting. If there is attachment to any object, wean the mind, make it unattached through enquiry and vigilance. Again and again think of Brahman. When the mind has become completely calm, do not disturb it even a bit. Continue the meditation vigorously.

Tandra is a half-sleepy state. Alasya is laziness. Nidra is sleep. Alasya and tandra are the precursors of sleep. These three are great obstacles in the path of realisation. Sleep is a powerful force of maya. You will be imagining that you are meditating. The mind will imediately run through its old grooves in the twinkling of an eye.

You will be doubting: "Did I go to sleep? Or did I meditate now? I think I had a small nap, as I feel heaviness of the eye-lids and body now." Sleep is the greatest obstacle as it is very powerful. Even though a sadhak is very careful and vigilant it overpowers him somehow or other. This is a very strong habit. It takes time and demands great strength of will to tear this old, old habit.

Arjuna is called Gudakesha or 'Conqueror of sleep'. Lakshmana also had conquered sleep. Besides these two persons we have not heard of anyone. However, there are people such as yogis and jnanis who have reduced their sleep to two or three hours.

Sleep is a psychological phenomenon. The brain needs rest at least for a short time, otherwise man feels drowsy and tired. He can neither work nor meditate. The sleep of a jnani is different from the sleep of a worldly man. In a jnani, the powerful impressions (samskaras) of God-contemplation are there. It is something akin to being established in the direct knowledge of God.

One should be careful in reducing his sleep. Reduce your sleep gradually. For the first four months go to bed at 11 p.m. and get up at 4 a.m. Have sleep for five hours. For the next four months, go to bed at 12 p.m. and get up at 4 a.m. Have sleep for four hours. For the next four months, go to bed at 12 p.m. and get up at 3 a.m. Thus, gradually reduce the hours of sleep.

Sadhaks can gain time for their sadhana by reducing sleep. The practice of reducing sleep will be very troublesome in the beginning. When the habits are changed, it will be pleasant in the end.

Give up rice and heavy meals at night. Take light food such as milk and fruits at night. You will be able to get up in the early morning. Sleep will not overpower you during meditation.

Aspirants do meditation in the morning for one hour between 4 and 5 a.m. Then they are overpowered by sleep. They begin to sleep again after 5 a.m. This is a general complaint. Do 10 or 20 rounds of pranayama at 5 a.m. Do sirshasana for two minutes. Again you will be fresh for meditation. Use your common-sense always. The old habit may recur again and again. Get rid of it again and again by suitable practices, strength of will, prayer, etc.

Practise yoga postures — sirshasana, sarvangasana, bhujangasana, salabhasana and dhanurasana — and do a little pranayama before you start meditation. Then you will not become sleepy during meditation.

Sometimes during the course of meditation the mind suddenly slips into its old grooves for sleeping. Aspirants think that they are meditating, while they are actually sleeping. Dash cold water on the face. Stand up and sing, and do vigorous chanting (kirtan) for five or ten mintues. Do ten or twenty mild breath retentions (kumbhakas). You can drive off sleep easily. Keep the light burning if you feel sleepy. Repeat the mantra loudly for some time. Sit in the kneeling posture (vajrasana).

When meditation becomes habitual, when the habit of getting up at 4 a.m. is well established and when you take light food at night, sleep will not trouble you at all during meditation.

The practice of keeping vigils on Sivaratri and Sri Krishna Janmastami is highly commendable. The Christians also keep vigils on Christmas and New Year's night.

Do not mistake drowsiness for savikalpa samadhi and deep sleep for nirvikalpa samadhi. The glory of the fourth state of consciousness (turiya) is ineffable, its splendour is indescribable. If the body is light, the mind is clear and there is cheerfulness, know that you are meditating. If the body is heavy, if the mind is dull, know that you were sleeping, not meditating.

Aspirants should not overload the stomach. Ninety percent of diseases take their origin in immoderation in diet. People have developed a strong habit of eating more food than is actually necessary, from their very childhood. Hindu mothers stuff the stomachs of their children with too much food. This is not the way of caressing and loving children. Over-loading brings drowsiness and sleep immediately. If there is no hunger you must not take any food. Overloading is the chief factor in bringing about night-pollutions. A diet of milk renders the body very very light. You can sit in one asana for hours together with ease and comfort. If you feel weak, for a day or two you can take a little rice and milk or barley and milk or any light diet. Those who are in the field of service and who give platform lectures and other intense spiritual propaganda activities, need solid substantial food.

'Man is as old as his arteries' is a truism in physiology and surgery. The salt that is present in food-stuffs is quite sufficient, you need not take any extra salt. You need not add any salt to curries and soups. If there is an excess of salt in the blood, the arteries lose their elasticity and cannot withstand the slightest increase in blood-pressure. The important organs such as the liver, kidneys, stomach, heart, etc., lose their elasticity. Excess salt in the blood produces a dry sort of itch, thirst, constipation, inability to bear the sun's heat and headache.

Those who eat meat have a crematorium in their stomachs. They are unfit for yoga practices and spiritual contemplation.

You cannot live on roots alone. To live on roots alone is a foolish imagination of an emotional man who has no idea of spiritual life. Extreme asceticism and self-torture are not necessary for the attainment of the Self. You will have to adopt always the middle course. Live on milk and fruits on Sundays and Ekadasi. Too much fasting brings weakness and retards vigorous spiritual sadhana. You can occasionally have mild fasts. Sannyasins and aspirants should take their bhiksha from the hands of those householders who earn their livelihood by honest means.

"*In pure food there is a pure nature, in a pure nature there is firm fixation of memory, in a firm memory there is release from all the knots of the heart.*" (*Chhandogya Upanishad*: 7-26-2).

Mind is formed out of the subtlest portion of the food. If you eat impure food, the mind also becomes impure. This is the dictum of sages and psychologists. Food plays an important part in the evolution of the mind. It has a direct influence on the mind. Meat, fish, eggs, stale unwholesome food, onions, garlic, etc., should be avoided by spiritual practitioners, as they excite passion and anger. The food should be simple, bland, light, wholesome and nutritious. Liquors and narcotics should be strictly abandoned. Chillies, condiments, spiced dishes, pungent articles, hot things, things that are sour, sweetmeats, etc., must be rejected.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* you will find: "*The foods that augment vitality, energy, vigour, health, joy and cheerfulness, that are delicious, bland, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the pure. The passionate desire foods that are burning and which produce pain, sickness and grief. That which is stale and flat, putrid and corrupt, left-overs and also unclean, is the food dear to the dark.*" (XVIII-8,9,10)

As is the food, so is the mind. Food exercises a tremendous influence on the mind. Look at the tiger which lives on flesh. How ferocious it is. Behold the cow which lives on grass. How mild and gentle she is. You can get good nutrition and energy from milk, fruits, vegetables, almonds, butter, cream, green gram, dhall, etc.

Milk is a perfect food. Sattvic food helps concentration of mind. It renders the mind pure.

Purity of food leads to purity of mind. This implies that all objects which are grasped by the senses must be pure. The ears should hear sublime utterances of the *Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavatam, Upanishads* and the names of God. The eyes must behold the form of God. Let your clothing be sattvic or pure. Let your speech be pure. Let your companions be sattvic persons. Let the books you study be pure. Let the place you live in be sattvic. Let the meditation room be decorated with sattvic pictures of the Lord. Then only will you attain God-consciousness. You will find in the *Peace Chants* also: "*O Gods, may we with our ears hear what is auspicious! Oh, ye fit to be worshipped, may we, with our eyes, see what is auspicious*!"

(b) Mental Obstacles

Yoga can be practised only by those who are very earnest about it and who are ready to annihilate their little ego and its demands. There is no half-measure in the spiritual path. Rigid discipline of senses and mind, rigorous tapas and constant meditation are necessary for the attainment of God-realisation. The hostile forces are ever ready to overwhelm you if you are not vigilant, if you give the least sanction or the smallest opening for them.

You cannot lead a double life. Pure divine life, a life of yoga, cannot co-exist with a mundane life of passion and ignorance. Divine life cannot conform to your own little standards. You must rise above the petty human level, you must raise yourself to a higher level of divine consciousness. You cannot claim freedom for your petty mind and little ego if you want to become a yogi. You should not affirm your own thoughts, judgements, desires and impulses. The lower nature with its retinue — arrogance, ignorance and turbulence — stands in the way of descent of the divine light.

So-called friends are your real enemies. You cannot find even a single unselfish friend in this universe. Your real friend in need who attends on you sincerely, is God, the Indweller of your heart. Worldly friends come to you to get money and other comforts when you are rolling in a Rolls Royce, when you have got plenty of money. When you are in adverse circumstances no one will care to look at you. Even your sons and wife will forsake you. This world is full of avarice, hypocrisy, double-dealing, flattery, untruth, cheating and selfishness. Be careful. Friends come to have idle talks with you and to waste your time. They have no idea of the value of time. They want to pull you down and make you also worldly. They will say: "Friend, what are you doing? Earn money as much as possible. Live comfortably now. Eat, drink and be merry. Let us go to a cinema. Today there is a good new production running at so and so theatre. There will be beautiful modern dancing. Who knows about the future? Where is God? Where is heaven? There is no rebirth, there is no liberation. It is all imagination and gossip. Enjoy now. Why do you fast? There is nothing beyond this world. Give up all sadhana and meditation. You are wasting your time." You will get this sort of advice from such worldly friends. Cut off all connections ruthlessly. Don't talk to any of your friends, however sincere they seem to be. Hide yourself away. Live alone at all times. Trust only in that immortal Friend who dwells in your heart. Then alone are you perfectly safe. He will give you whatever you want. Hear His sweet counsel from within with one-pointed mind, and follow it.

Very often depression comes in meditation in neophytes, owing to the effect of previous tendencies (samskaras), the influence of astral entities, evil spirits, bad company, cloudy days, bad stomach (indigestion) and loaded bowels. Treat the cause. Remove the cause. Do not allow depression to overpower you. Immediately take a brisk long walk along the seaside or riverside, or run in the open air. Sing divine songs. Chant OM loudly for one hour. Play on the harmonium if you know the art. Have cheerful thoughts, good laughter. If necessary you can take a purgative and a dose of carminative mixture.

Do some breath retention (kumbhakas) and sitali pranayama. Drink a small cup of orange juice or hot tea or coffee. Read some of the elevating portions of the *Avadhuta Gita* and the *Upanishads*.

When depression comes and troubles you, the mind will revolt. The undercurrent of desires will gush to the surface of the mind and torment you. Sensuous thoughts will agitate the mind and try to overwhelm you. Be bold, stand adamant, face these passing shocks. Keep your mind cool. Do not identify yourself with these obstacles.

Just as clouds screen and obstruct the sun, the cloud of gloom and despair will stand in the way of your practice. Even then you must not leave the practice of japa, concentration and meditation. These small clouds of gloom and despair will pass off soon. Give the suggestion to the mind: 'Even this will pass away'.

Doubt is your great enemy. It causes restlessness of mind. It will again and again raise its head to mislead the aspirant. It should be killed beyond resurrection by certainty of conviction and firm unshakable faith based on reasoning. Destroy all doubts through enquiry and wisdom.

There are three kinds of doubts — feeling of suspicion, spiritual doubt and perverted understanding. When the aspirant is not established in his own essential nature all of a sudden he doubts if there can be an all-pervading Brahman. Then he wonders how the individual soul, with a limited perishable body, can identify himself with the supreme all-pervading Substance. Then he begins to identify himself with the body, in spite of all his meditation. Hearing of the scriptures destroys the first doubt, reflection on their meaning destroys the second and deep meditation destroys the third kind of doubt.

Lack of faith is a dangerous obstacle in the spiritual path. The student slackens his efforts when these doubts crop up. Maya is very powerful and mysterious. Mind is maya. Mind deludes the student through doubting and forgetfulness. Sometimes he gives up his sadhana altogether, which is a serious mistake. Whenever doubt tries to overpower any student he should at once take recourse to the company of mahatmas and remain with them for some time under the influence of their spiritual currents. He should clear his doubts by conversing with them. Generally an aspirant starts his sadhana with expectations of so many siddhis within a short time. When he does not get them he gets dejected and stops his practice. This is the trouble in almost all cases. He thinks that kundalini will be awakened within six months and that he will have clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, flying in the air, etc. He entertains so many fantastic and queer ideas.

Do not bother about doubts. There is no end to them. Purify your heart. Go on vigorously with purificatory processes such as japa and meditation. Meditate regularly. The doubts will be cleared by themselves in a mysterious manner. The great Teacher or inner Ruler is with you. He will illumine you and remove your doubts.

Various sorts of fantastic dreams trouble some aspirants very much. Sometimes there is a mixture of meditation and dreams. As the phenomenon of the dreams is very peculiar and inexplicable, it is very difficult to control dreams unless you wipe out all the subconscious impressions in the causal body and control all thoughts. As you grow in purity, discrimination and concentration, dreams will decrease. The presence of dreams denotes that you are not yet well established in deep meditation, that you have not removed tossing of the mind and that you have not done constant sadhana.

Intense desire or attachment to sensual pleasures or sense objects is one of the greatest of all obstacles. The mind refuses to leave sensual pleasures completely. Through the force of dispassion and meditation the desires get suppressed for some time. All of a sudden the mind thinks of sensual pleasures through force of habit and memory and mental disturbance arises. Concentration decreases and the mind moves outwards to sensual objects. There cannot be an iota of happiness for a man who is thirsting for sensual objects. Only when this thirsting dies does man enjoy peace. Then only can he meditate and rest in the Self.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* you will find: "*The turbulent senses, O Arjuna, violently carry away the mind of a wise man, though he be striving to control them; for the mind which follows in the wake of the wandering senses carries away one's discrimination, as the wind carries away a boat upon the waters.*" (II-60, 67). "*The objects of the senses turn away from the abstinent man, leaving the longing behind: but this longing also turns away on seeing the Supreme.*" (II-59).

Some desires lurk in the corners of the mind. Just as old dirt comes out from the corners of the room when you sweep, so also through the pressure of yoga practices these old lurking desires come out. The sadhak should be very careful, he should be ever watching the mind vigilantly. He must nip the desires in the bud by developing his dispassion and discrimination and by increasing his period of japa and meditation. He must observe unbroken silence and do vigorous meditation and pranayama. He should live on milk and fruits for forty days and observe fast on ekadasi days. He should completely give up mixing with anybody. He should never come out of his room and should plunge himself deep into his sadhana. Hidden desires and worldly ambitions of all sorts also come under this category. Ambition makes the mind very restless. Man should have the one laudable ambition of getting Self-realisation.

Sex impulse and ambition are two great disturbing factors in meditation. They carry on guerilla warfare, they attack again and again. They appear to be thinned out for some time but they get revived often. They should be extirpated by great effort — enquiry, the power of discrimination between Atman and anatman (Self and non-Self) and the feeling that all is God.

If the mind constantly dwells on sensual objects the conception of the reality of the universe will surely increase. If the mind ceaselessly thinks of the Atman (Absolute), the world appears like a dream. Meditate and behold the imperishable Atman. Rest yourself firmly in the Self. Nothing can hurt you now. You can become invincible.

When you meditate, when you develop divine or sattvic virtues, a spiritual road is constructed in the mind. If you are not regular in meditation, if your dispassion wanes and if you become careless and non-vigilant, the spiritual road will be washed away by the flood of impure thoughts and evil desires. Therefore be regular in your meditation. Regularity in meditation is of paramount importance.

Anger is a gate to hell. It destroys the knowledge of Self. It is born of rajas. It is all-consuming and all-polluting. It is the greatest enemy of peace. It is a modification of lust. Just as milk is changed into curd, so also lust or desire becomes transmuted into anger. When a man's desire is not gratified he becomes angry, then his mind becomes confused and he loses his memory and understanding. He perishes. A man when he is angry will say anything he likes and do anything he likes. He commits murder. A hot word results in fighting and stabbing. He is under intoxication. He loses his senses for the time being and does not know exactly what he is doing. He is a prey to anger, he is under the sway of anger. Anger is a form of divine power (shakti) or Devi. In *Chandipat* you will find: "*I bow to that Devi who is seated in all beings in the form of anger.*"

Resentment, indignation, fury, wrath and irritation are all varieties of anger, according to degree or intensity. If a man wants to correct another man and use slight anger unselfishly as a force to check and improve him, then it is called 'religious anger'. Suppose a man molests a girl and tries to outrage her and a by-stander becomes angry towards this criminal, then it is called 'righteous indignation'. This is not bad. Only when the anger is the outcome of greed or selfish motives is it bad. Sometimes a religious teacher has to express a little anger outwardly to correct his disciples. This is also not bad.

One has to do it. But he should be cool within and hot and impetuous outside. He should not allow the anger to take deep root in his inner consciousness for a long time. It should pass off immediately like a wave in the sea.

If a man becomes irritable for trifling things very often it is a definite sign of mental weakness. One should control irritability by developing patience, right thinking, forgiveness, love, mercy and the spirit of sincere service. When anger is controlled it becomes transmuted into an energy that can move the world. It becomes changed into effulgent power, just as heat or light is changed into electricity. Energy takes another form. If an aspirant has controlled anger completely, half of his sadhana is over. Control of anger means control of lust also. All vices, evil qualities and wrong actions take their origin in anger. If anger is controlled, all bad qualities die by themselves. He who has controlled anger cannot do any wrong or evil action. He is always just. An easily irritated man is always unjust. He is swayed by impulses and emotions. Too much loss of semen is the chief cause of irritability and anger. The root cause of anger lies in egoism. Egoism should be removed by right knowledge, then only can one control anger completely, to the very root. Through development of the opposite virtues such as forgiveness, love, peace, compassion and friendship, it can be controlled to some extent. The force can be reduced. Only direct knowledge (jnana) completely fries all tendencies. The practice of silence (mauna) is of great help in controlling anger.

It is very difficult to say when a man will be thrown into a state of fury. All of a sudden he gets a terrible fit of anger over trifling matters. When the anger assumes a grave form it becomes difficult to control. It should be controlled when it still has the form of a small ripple in the sub-conscious mind. One should watch the mind carefully, whenever there is a sign of irritability. Then it becomes very easy.

When a man is furious he has lost all control. Anger gains strength by repetition. If it is checked man gradually gains strength of will. An aspirant should direct all his attention towards conquest of this powerful enemy. Sattvic food, japa, meditation, prayer, satsang, right thinking, service, kirtan, celibacy and pranayama will all go a long way in eradicating this dire malady. A combined method should be adopted in its removal. When a man abuses you, try to keep quiet. Bear the insult. You will gain strength. Check the impulses and emotions to begin with. Whenever there is likelihood of a burst of anger during conversation or debate, stop your speech. Always try to speak sweet, soft words. The words must be soft and the arguments hard; but if the words are hard it will bring discord. If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once and take a brisk walk. Drink some cool water immediately. Chant OM loudly for 10 minutes. Smoking, meat-eating and drinking of liquors make the heart very irritable. Therefore they should be completely abandoned. Tobacco brings diseases of heart. It gives rise to 'tobacco-heart' which gets easily irritated.

Be careful in the selection of your companions. Talk little, mix little. Plunge yourself into spiritual sadhana. Think that the world is a long dream, that the world is unreal. This will prevent anger. Enquire: "What is abuse? What do I gain by getting angry? It is only a waste of energy and time. I am not the body. The Atman is the same in all." This will completely remove anger. Anger spoils the blood. It throws various poisons into the blood.

Instances are recorded of women who have killed children by nursing them with breast milk when they were in a fit of anger. In the light of modern psychology, all diseases take their origin in anger. Rheumatism, heart diseases and nervous diseases are due to anger. The whole nervous system is completely shattered by one fit of anger. It takes months before it is restored to normal equilibrium.

A social nature is good for doing karma yoga, but it is extremely bad for practising meditation. It drags you out and makes your mind restless. It invites many friends who disturb you in a variety of ways. When you sit for meditation, thoughts of your friends and office work or the memory of a conversation that took place in the previous evening with your friends and relatives will disturb your mind and cause distraction. You will have to withdraw the mind again and again cautiously from these extraneous worldly thoughts and fix it again and again on your object of meditation or goal. You will have to disregard and ignore the worldly thoughts. Be indifferent, do not welcome these thoughts or identify yourself with them. Say within yourself: "I do not want these thoughts. I have nothing to do with them." They will gradually vanish.

Bad surroundings, obscene pictures, obscene songs, novels that deal with love, cinemas, theatres, the sight of pairing of animals, words which give rise to bad ideas in the mind — in short anything that causes evil thoughts in the mind — constitute evil company. Aspirants generally complain: "We have been doing sadhana for the last fifteen years. We have not made any solid spiritual progress." The obvious answer is that they have not totally shunned evil company. Newspapers deal with all sorts of worldly topics. Aspirants should entirely give up reading of newspapers. Reading of newspapers kindles worldly samskaras, causes sensational excitement in the mind, makes the mind out-going, produces an impression that the world is a solid reality and makes one forget the Truth that lies underneath these names and forms.

Environments are not actually bad, but your mind is bad. It is not disciplined properly. Wage a war with this horrible and terrible mind. Do not complain against bad environments but complain first against your own mind. Train your mind first. If you practise concentration amidst unfavourable environments you will grow strong, you will develop your will force quickly and you will become a dynamic personality. See good in everything and transmute evil into good.

If you can give up idle talk and gossiping and idle curiosity to hear rumours and news of others, and if you do not meddle with the affairs of others, you will have ample time to do meditation. Make the mind quiet during meditation. If worldly thoughts try to enter the mind during meditation, reject them. Have steady devotion to truth. Be cheerful. Increase the sattvic materials in you. You can enjoy everlasting bliss.

Watch your mind always very carefully. Be vigilant, be on the alert. Do not allow waves of irritability, jealousy, anger, hatred and lust to rise from the mind. These dark waves are enemies of meditation, peace and wisdom. Suppress them immediately by entertaining sublime, divine thoughts. Evil thoughts that have arisen may be destroyed by originating good thoughts and maintaining them by repeating any mantra or the name of the Lord, by thinking on any form of the Lord, by practice of pranayama, by singing the name of the Lord, by doing good actions and by thinking on the misery that arises from evil thoughts.

When you attain the state of purity no evil thoughts will arise in your mind. Just as it is easy to check the intruder or enemy at the gate, so also it is easy to overcome an evil thought as soon as it arises.

Nip it in the bud. Do not allow it to strike deep root.

In the beginning of your practice of thought-control you will experience great difficulty. You will have to wage war with them. They will try their level best for their own existence. They will say: "We have every right to remain in this palace of your mind. We have had a sole monopoly from time immemorial to occupy this area. Why should we vacate our dominion now? We will fight for our birthright till the end." They will pounce upon you with great ferocity. When you sit for meditation all sorts of evil thoughts will crop up. As you attempt to suppress them they want to attack you with redoubled force and vigour, but positive always overcomes the negative. Just as darkness cannot stand before the sun, just as the leopard cannot stand before the lion, so also all these dark, negative thoughts, invisible intruders and enemies of peace cannot stand before the sublime thoughts. They must die by themselves.

When you are very busy in your daily work you may not harbour any impure thoughts; but when you take rest and leave the mind blank, the impure thoughts will try to enter insidiously. You must be careful when the mind is relaxed.

In the beginning all sorts of evil thoughts will arise in your mind as soon as you sit for meditation. Why does this happen during meditation, when you attempt to entertain pure thoughts? Aspirants leave their spiritual practice of meditation on account of this. If you try to drive a monkey, it attempts to pounce upon you with vengeance. Even so, the old evil samskaras and old evil thoughts try to attack you with vengeance and with redoubled force only at the time when you try to raise good, divine thoughts. Your enemy endeavours to resist you vehemently when you try to eject him out of your house. There is a law of resistance in nature. Do not be discouraged. Go on with your practice of meditation regularly. These evil thoughts will be thinned out.

Suppose the evil thoughts stay in your mind for twelve hours and recur every third day. If, by daily practice of concentration and meditation, you can make them stay for ten hours and recur once in a week, that is a decided improvement. If you continue your practice the period of stay and recurrence will be gradually lessened. Eventually they will disappear altogether. Compare your present state with that of last year. You will be able to find out your progress. The progress will be very slow in the beginning, so it will be difficult for you to gauge.

Make no violent efforts to control the mind, but rather allow it to run along for a while and exhaust its efforts. It will take advantage of the opportunity and will jump around like an unchained monkey at first, until it gradually slows down and looks to you for orders. It may take some time to tame it down at first, but each time you try it will come around to you in a shorter time.

If evil thoughts enter the mind do not use your will-force in driving them away. You will only lose your energy, tax your will and fatigue yourself. The greater the efforts you make the more the evil thoughts will return with redoubled force. They will return more quickly and will become more powerful. Be indifferent, keep quiet, they will pass off soon — or substitute good counter-thoughts, or think of the picture of God and the mantra again and again, and pray.

Your mind will sometimes shudder when evil thoughts enter your mind. This is a sign of your spiritual progress. You are growing spiritually. You will be much tormented when you think of your evil actions committed in the past. This is also a sign of your spiritual upheaval. You will not repeat the same actions now. Your mind will tremble and your body will quiver whenever a wrong samskara of some evil actions urges you to do the same act through force of habit. Continue your meditation with full vigour and earnestness. All memories of evil actions, all evil thoughts, all evil promptings will die by themselves. You will be established in perfect purity and peace.

An aspirant complains: "As I continue my meditation, layer after layer of impurities rise from the subconscious mind. Sometimes they are so strong and formidable that I am bewildered as to how to check them. I am not perfectly established in truth and brahmacharya. The old habits of speaking lies and lust are still lurking in the mind. Lust is troubling me vigorously. The very idea of women agitates the mind. My mind is so sensitive that I am not able to hear or think of them. As soon as the thought comes in the mind, all the hidden samskaras of lust rise up. As soon as these ideas come in my mind the meditation and also the peace of the whole day is spoiled. I advise my mind, coax it, frighten it, but it is of no avail. My mind revolts. I do not know how to control this passion. Irritability, egoism, anger, greed, hatred, attachment, etc., are still lurking in me. As far as I have analysed the mind, lust is my chief enemy and it is a very strong one too. I request you to be kind enough to advise me how to get rid of the same.''

Passion is lurking in you. You may also ask me the reason why you become frequently angry. Anger is nothing but the modification of passion. When passion is not gratified it assumes the form of anger. The real cause for anger is ungratified passion. It expresses itself in the form of anger when you deal with the mistakes of your servants. This is an indirect cause or external stimulus for its expression. The currents of love and hate are not thoroughly eradicated, they are only attenuated or thinned out to some extent. The senses are yet turbulent. They are subjugated to a small degree, but there are still under-currents of desires and cravings. The outgoing tendencies of the senses are not totally checked and you are not established in sense-control (pratyahara). There is no strong and sustained discrimination or dispassion. The aspiration for the Divine has not become intense. Rajas and tamas are still doing havoc and there is only a small increase in the quantity of sattva. Evil thoughts are not thinned out, they are still powerful. Positive virtues have not been cultivated to a considerable degree. That is why you have not attained perfect concentration. Purify the mind first and concentration will come by itself.

Positive always overcomes the negative. This is the law of nature. Negative evil thoughts cannot stand before positive good thoughts. Purity overcomes lust, patience overcomes anger and irritability, and love overcomes hatred. The very fact that you feel uneasy now when an evil thought comes to the surface of the mind during meditation indicates that you are growing in spirituality. In earlier days you consciously harboured all sorts of evil thoughts, you welcomed and nourished them.

Persist in your spiritual practices. Be tenacious and diligent. If you are regular in meditation these thoughts will gradually die by themselves. Meditation is a fire to burn these thoughts. Do not try to drive out all worldly thoughts. Entertain thoughts concerning the object of meditation. You are bound to succeed. Even a dull type of aspirant will notice a marvellous change in him if he keeps up the practice of repetition of a mantra (japa) and meditation for two or three years in a continuous stream. Then he cannot leave it. Even if he stops his practice of meditation for a day he will actually feel that he has lost something on that day. His mind will be quite uneasy.

Increase your period of japa and meditation, and strengthen non-attachment and discrimination, too. Pray fervently. Live on milk and fruits. All these obstacles will pass away like a rent cloud. With the removal of all troubles you will shine gloriously. The improvement will be known to you. There will be a change in the mind, in speech and in all your actions.

Obstacles on the Spiritual Path

Every aspirant will have to face various sorts of difficulties in the spiritual path. Buddha, Uddalaka, Sikhidvaja and others also experienced great difficulties.

Just as volunteers obstruct the path of those who want to enter a conference without tickets, so also the old tendencies of enmity, hatred, lust, jealousy, fear, honour, respect, etc., assume definite forms and obstruct the path of aspirants. You need not be discouraged on this score. Never despair. Failures are stepping stones to success. Muster all your strength and courage and march afresh on the path with redoubled vigour and energy. No impediment can stand before a man of fiery determination and iron will.

Perfection cannot be attained in a single birth alone. Perfected sages are the products of the sum-total of virtuous actions done in several births. Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "*The yogi labouring with assiduity, purified from sin and perfected through manifold births, reaches the supreme Goal.*" (VI-45)

When the mind is sattvic you can get flashes of intuition. You will compose poems. You will understand the significance of the *Upanishads* beautifully. But this stage will not last long in neophytes. Rajas and tamas try to obstruct meditation. The mind that was calm owing to the preponderance of sattva during the course of meditation, begins to tremble and quiver owing to the entry of excess rajas. Thoughts (sankalpas) increase in number. Restlessness increases, thoughts of action manifest and planning and scheming come in.

The petty obstinate ego which actuates the human personality is a serious obstacle in meditation or the path of Self-realisation. This little self-arrogating principle supports all surface thoughts and dominates the habitual ways of feeling, character and action. This is rajasic and tamasic egoism which conceals or covers the higher divine sattvic nature. It veils the self-luminous immortal Soul or Atman.

In the beginning the stage of progress may be like the frogs, never steady and continuous. You may think that you have almost reached the goal, and experience for the next 15 or 20 days nothing but disappointment. There will be a jump from position to position, but not a continuous development. Take a little rest. Again do japa. Pray and meditate. Have sustained, intense dispassion and do intense protracted sadhana. Be under the direct guidance and in close contact with your own guru for some years. You will have steady and continuous progress.

Make ceaseless enquiry of the Atman. Mark well the word 'ceaseless'. This is important. Then only will there be the dawn of spiritual knowledge. The sun of knowledge will arise in the firmament of consciousness.

A microscopic minority only are fit for whole-timed meditation. Only people like Sadasiva Brahman and Sri Sankara can spend the whole time in meditation. Many sadhus who take to the path of renunciation have become completely tamasic. Tamas is mistaken for sattva. This is a great blunder. One can evolve beautifully by doing karma yoga in the world if he knows how to spend his time profitably. A house-holder should seek the advice of sannyasins and mahatmas from time to time, draw a daily routine and adhere to it strictly amidst worldly activities. Rajas can be converted into sattva, but it is impossible to convert tamas into sattva all of a sudden. Tamas should first be turned into rajas.

Young sadhus who take to renunciation do not stick to routine. They do not hear the words of elders nor obey the orders of the guru. They want absolute independence from the very beginning. They lead a happy-go-lucky life with no one to check them. They have their own way. They do not know how to regulate their energy or how to chalk out a daily programme, so they aimlessly wander about from place to place and become tamasic within six months. They sit for half an hour in some asana and imagine that they are realised souls.

If an aspirant who has taken to renunciation finds that he is not evolving or improving in meditation and that he is going into a tamasic state, he should at once take up some kind of service for some years and work vigorously. He should combine work along with meditation. This is wisdom, this is prudence, this is sagacity. Then he should go into seclusion. He should use his common-sense all throughout his sadhana. It is very difficult to go out of a tamasic state. He should be very cautious, and when tamas tries to overtake him he should immediately do some sort of brisk work. He can run in the open air, draw water from the wells, etc. He should drive it off by some intelligent means or other.

Samskaras turn into actualities when opportunities crop up, but the aspirant should not be discouraged. They will lose their force after some time and die by themselves. Just as the dying wick burns with intensity just before it gets extinguished, so also those old samskaras show their teeth and force before they are eradicated. The aspirant should not get unnecessarily alarmed. He will have to increase the force or momentum of spiritual samskaras by doing japa, meditation, study of scriptures (svadhyaya), virtuous actions, satsang and cultivation of sattvic virtues. These new spiritual samskaras will neutralise the old vicious ones. The aspirant should be intent on his sadhana, he should plunge himself into spiritual practices. This is his obligatory duty.

When the aspirant does intense sadhana to obliterate the old samskaras, they try to rebound upon him with vengeance and with re-doubled force. They take forms and come before him as stumbling blocks. The old samskaras of fear, moha (delusion or extreme greed), hatred, jealousy, prejudice, fault-finding, self-justification, back-biting, building castles in the air, evil thoughts and passion assume grave forms.

Fear is a very great obstacle in the path of God-realisation. A timid aspirant is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. He cannot dream of Self-realisation even in a thousand births. One must risk one's life if one wants to attain immortality. Spiritual wealth cannot be gained without self-sacrifice, self-denial or self abnegation. A fearless dacoit who has no false identification with the body is fit for God-realisation. Only his thought current will have to be changed. Fear is an imaginary non-entity. It assumes solid forms and troubles the aspirant in various ways. If one conquers fear he is on the road to success, he has almost reached the goal. Tantric sadhana makes the student fearless. This is one great advantage in this line. He has to practise in the burial ground, sitting over a dead body at midnight. This kind of sadhana emboldens the student.

Fear assumes various forms. There is fear of death, fear of disease, scorpion-phobia, fear of solitude, fear of company, fear of losing something and fear of public criticism in the form of 'what will people say about me?' Some are not afraid of tigers in the forests, they are not afraid of gunshots in the battlefield, but they are awfully afraid of public criticism. Fear of public criticism stands in the way of the aspirant's spiritual progress. He should stick to his own principles and convictions, even though he is persecuted and even though he is at the point of being blown up at the mouth of a machine-gun. Then only will he grow and realise. All aspirants suffer from this dire malady — fear. Fear of all sorts should be totally eradicated by contemplation on the Atman, enquiry, devotion and cultivation of the opposite quality — courage. Courage overpowers fear and timidity.

Moha (delusion or extreme greed) is very hard to overcome. First comes desire, then comes anger, then greed, then moha. Desire is very powerful, so prominence is given to it. There is an intimate connection between desire and anger. Similarly, there is close relationship between greed and delusion. A greedy man has got great deluded attachment for his money. His mind is always on the money-box and the bunch of keys he has tied to his waist-cord. Money is his very blood and life. He lives to collect money, he is a gate-keeper only for his money. The enjoyer is his prodigal son. Money-lenders are the favourite tools of our friend greed. He has taken his stronghold in their minds. These are the Shylocks of the present day. They suck the blood of poor people by taking enormous interest (25 per cent, 50 per cent and even 100 per cent at times). Cruel-hearted people! They pretend to show that they are of charitable disposition by doing acts such as opening poor-feeding houses, building temples, etc., but such acts cannot neutralise their abominable sins and merciless acts. Many poor families are ruined by these people. They do not think that the bungalows and palaces in which they live are built out of the blood of these poor people.

Greed has destroyed their intellect and made them absolutely blind. They have eyes but they see not. Greed always makes the mind restless. A man possessing ten thousand rupees plans to get one hundred thousand, a millionaire schemes to become a multi-millionaire. Greed is insatiable, there is no end to it. It assumes various subtle forms. A man thirsts for name and fame and applause. This is greed. A sub-judge thirsts to become a High Court judge and a third class magistrate thirsts to become a first-class magistrate with full powers. This is also greed. A sadhu thirsts for psychic siddhis. This is another form of greed. A sadhu thirsts to open several ashrams in different centres. This is also greed. A greedy man is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. Destroy greed of all sorts by enquiry, devotion, meditation, japa, contentment, integrity, honesty and disinterestedness, and enjoy peace.

Moha is also infatuated love for one's own body, wife, children, father, mother, brothers, sisters and property. Like greed, it takes various subtle forms. The mind gets attached to one name and form. If it is detached from one name and form, it clings tenaciously to another.

Look at the attachment of monkeys. If the baby monkey dies, the mother monkey will carry the dead skeleton for two or three months. Such is the power of attachment. If a father receives a telegram that his only son is dead, he immediately gets a shock and faints. Sometimes, he dies also. This is the power of attachment — the whole world runs through it. It is through attachment that one is bound to the wheel of samsara and gets pain. It is a kind of powerful liquor that brings intoxication in the twinkling of an eye.

Attachment troubled even Sri Sankaracharya. He had to attend the sick-bed and funeral rites of his mother, even though he was a sannyasin. A great sage, Pattinattu Swami of South India, sang when his mother died: "There was a fire at first in Tripura Samhara. Then there was a fire in Lanka due to Hanuman. Now the death of my beloved mother has caused a burning fire in my stomach and heart. Let me also apply fire to this corpse of my mother." This attachment should be eradicated by discrimination (viveka), dispassion (vairagya), enquiry (vichara), contemplation of God, devotion, seclusion, study of vedantic literature, etc. It can only be completely removed by renuciation, sannyasa and Self-realisation.

Hatred is the deadliest foe of an aspirant. It is an inveterate enemy. It is an old-standing associate of the jiva. Contempt, prejudice, sneering, taunting, teasing, ridiculing, mocking, frowning and showing wry faces are all forms of hatred. Hatred bubbles out again and again. It is insatiable like lust or greed. It may temporarily subside for some time, and may again burst out with redoubled force. If the father dislikes a man, his sons and daughters also begin to hate that man without any rhyme or reason whatsoever, although that man has not done them any wrong or injustice. Such is the force of hatred. If any one even remembers the figure of a man who has done him some serious injury some forty years ago, at once hatred creeps into his mind and his face shows clear signs of enmity and anger.

Hatred develops by repetition. Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love only. Hatred needs prolonged and intense treatment, as its branches ramify in various directions in the sub-conscious mind. It lurks in different corners. Constant selfless service combined with meditation for a period of twelve years is necessary. An Englishman hates an Irishman and an Irishman hates an Englishman. A Catholic hates a Protestant and a Protestant hates a Catholic. This is religious hatred. There is communal hatred. One man hates another man at first sight without any reason. Selfishness, jealousy, greed and lust are the retinue of hatred. In Kali Yuga the force of hatred is augmented. Pure unselfish love should be cultivated. It is unknown in this world amongst worldy people.

One should have fear of God. Solomon says: "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Service with the feeling that everything is the Self can remove hatred completely and bring realisation of the oneness of life. Prejudice, contempt, etc., will completely vanish by selfless service. Vedanta in daily life when put into actual practice can eradicate all sorts of hatred. There is one Self hidden in all beings. Then why do you frown at others? Why do you treat others with contempt? Why do you divide and separate? Realise the unity of life and consciousness. Feel the Atman everywhere. Rejoice and radiate love and peace everywhere.

Prejudice is unreasonable dislike for something or some person. Prejudice makes the brain callous, it cannot vibrate properly to grasp things in their true light and one cannot endure honest differences of opinion. This is intolerance. Religious intolerance and prejudice are great obstacles in the path of God-realisation. Some orthodox Sanskrit priests strongly think that only Sanskrit-knowing people can have God-realisation. They think that English-knowing sannyasins are barbarians and that they cannot have Self-realisation. Look at the thick foolishness of these bigoted priests! Incorrigible, petty-minded, narrow-hearted, crooked sectarians! If a man has prejudice against the *Bible* or *Koran* he cannot grasp the truths of these books.

His brain becomes hard, stony and callous. A man can realise God by studying and following the principles that are laid down in the *Koran, Bible* or *Zend Avesta* or the Pali books of Lord Buddha.

Aspirants should try to remove prejudice of all sorts; then only can they see the truth everywhere. Truth is not the sole monopoly of the Sanskrit priests of Benares. Truth, Rama, Krishna and Jesus are the common property of all.

Sectarians and bigoted people confine themselves to a small circumscribed circle or area. They have no large heart. They cannot see the good points in others on account of their jaundiced vision. They think that only *their* principles and doctrines are good. They treat others with contempt. They think that *their* sect is superior to others and that *their* teacher only is a man of God-realisation. They always fight with others. There is no harm in praising one's own guru and sticking to his principles and teachings, but one should pay equal regard to the teachings of other prophets and other saints. Then only will the feeling of universal love and brotherhood manifest. This will eventually lead to the realisation of God or Atman in all beings. Prejudice, intolerance, bigotry and sectarianism should be thoroughly eradicated. Prejudice and intolerance are forms of hatred. Even highly educated people are very mean and petty-minded.

Jealousy is the worst enemy of peace and illumination. It is the strongest weapon of maya. Aspirants should always be on the alert. They should not become slaves of name and fame and jealousy. He who has jealousy is a small little being only. He is far from God. One should rejoice at the welfare of others. One should develop complacency when he sees others in a prosperous condition. He should feel the presence of God in all beings. Jealousy assumes various forms, and all forms of jealousy must be totally eradicated. Just as milk again and again bubbles up during the process of boiling, so also jealousy bursts out again and again. It must be entirely rooted out.

Even sadhus who have renounced everything and who live with only one cloth in the caves of Gangotri and Uttarkashi in the Himalayas, are not free from this evil. Sadhus are more jealous than house-holders. Their hearts burn when they see some other sadhu in a flourishing condition, or when they notice that the neighbouring sadhu is respected and honoured by the public. They try to vilify the neighbour and adopt methods for his destruction and elimination. What a sad sight! What a deplorable spectacle! Horrible to think! Dreadful to imagine! When the heart burns how can you expect peace of mind?

The mind of the aspirant who always tries to poke his nose into the affairs of other men is always out-going. This is a detestable habit of man. It clings to him tenaciously. How can he think of God when his mind is ever engaged in finding fault in others? If you spend even a fraction of the time that you waste, in finding your own faults, you would have become a great saint by this time. Why do you care for the faults of others? Improve yourself first. Reform yourself first. Purify yourself first. Wash the impurities from your own mind. He who applies himself diligently to his spiritual practices cannot find even a single second to look into the affairs of others. If the fault-finding nature dies, there will be no occasion for criticising others. Much time is wasted in back-biting, tale-bearing, scandal-mongering, etc. Time is most precious. We do not know when death will take away our lives. Every second must be utilised in divine contemplation. Let the world have its own ways. Mind your own affairs. Clean your mental factory. That man who does not interfere with others is the most peaceful man in the world.

The habit of self-justification is very dangerous for an aspirant. Self-assertion, self-sufficiency, obstinacy, dissimulation and speaking falsehood are the constant retinue or attendants of self-justification. He who has developed this can never improve himself, as he will never admit his faults. He will always try his level best to justify himself in various ways. He will not hesitate to tell several lies to support his false statements. He will tell one lie to cover another lie, and he will speak lies ad infinitum. The aspirant should always admit his faults, mistakes and weaknesses, etc., then and there. Then only can he improve quickly.

Back-biting is a dirty, abominable habit of petty-minded people. Almost all are victims of this dire malady. This has become an ingrained habit of narrow-hearted, mischievous people. This is a tamasic habit. The play of this world is kept up by this evil habit of man. It is maya's strong weapon to spread restlessness throughout the world. If you see four men sitting in a group, think that some back-biting is surely going on there. If you behold four sadhus talking, you can at once infer, without any shadow of doubt, that they are back-biting against some person or other. The sadhu will be talking: "The food of that kshetra is very bad. That swamiji is a very bad man." Back-biting is more prevalent amongst the so-called sadhus than amongst house-holders. Even educated sannyasins and householders are not free from this dreadful disease. A sadhu who is engaged in contemplation will always be alone.

The root cause of back-biting is ignorance or jealousy. The back-biter wants to pull down or destroy the man who is in a prosperous condition by false vilification, slander, calumny, false accusation, etc. There is no other work for a back-biter except scandal-mongering. He lives on back-biting. He takes pleasure in back-biting and mischief-making. This is his inner nature. Back-biters are a menace to society. They are the worst criminals. They need capital punishment. Double-dealing, crookedness, diplomacy, chicanery, quibbling, tricks and artifices are the retinue of back-biting. A back-biter can never have a calm peaceful mind. His mind is always planning or scheming in wrong directions. An aspirant should be absolutely free from this dreadful vice. He should walk alone, live alone, eat alone and meditate alone. If a man who has not removed jealousy, back-biting, hatred, pride and selfishness, says: "I am meditating for six hours daily," it is all nonsense. There is no hope of getting a meditative mood even for six minutes unless a man removes all these evil thoughts and purifies his mind first by selfless service for six years.

Building castles in the air is a trick of the mind. Look at this wonder! The aspirant is meditating in an isolated cave in the Himalayas. He plans in the cave: "After finishing my meditation I must move about in San Francisco and New York and deliver lectures there. I must start a centre of spiritual activity in Columbia. I must do something new in the world. I must do something which none has done up to this time." This is ambition and egoistic imagination. It is a great obstacle which will not allow the mind to rest even for a second. Again and again there will be the resurrection of some scheme, speculation or plan or other. The aspirant will be thinking that he is having deep meditation, but if he closely watches his mind through introspection and self-analysis it will be seen to be a true case of building castles in the air. One will subside and another will crop up in the twinkling of an eye. It may be a small idea or ripple in the mind-lake, but it will gain tremendous force within a few minutes by repeated thinking.

The power of imagination is tremendous. Maya havocs through the power of imagination. Imagination fattens the mind. It is like musk — it renovates and vivifies a dying mind. The power of imagination will not allow the mind to keep quiet even for a second. Just as swarms of locusts come forth in a continuous stream, so also currents of imagination will stream forth incessantly. Enquiry, discrimination, prayer, japa, meditation, satsang, fasting, pranayama and practice of thoughtlessness will obviate this obstacle. Pranayama checks the velocity of the mind and calms the bubbling thoughts. A young ambitious man is unfit to remain in a solitary cave. He who has done selfless service in the world for some years and who has practised meditation for several years in the plains in a solitary room, can live in a cave. Only such a man can really enjoy the solitude of Himalayan retreats.

When you constantly contemplate on the meaning of the mahavakyas 'I am Brahman' (Aham Brahmasmi) or 'That thou art' (Tat tvam asi) all seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling will stop. But owing to the force of samskaras, building castles in the air will continue. Sleep also will intervene. If you are alert and if by protracted efforts and incessant vigilant meditation on Brahman you get over these two obstacles, steady thought of Brahman alone and knowledge of Brahman will dawn in no time. Ignorance will vanish. You will be established in the supreme state of bliss. All accumulated karmas will be burnt up in the fire of wisdom.

All vrittis are thinned out and assume subtle forms when you practise japa and meditation. They should be totally eradicated through samadhi or blissful union with the Lord. Then only are you safe. Latent vrittis will be waiting for opportunities to assume a grave and expanded form. You should be ever careful and vigilant. Resist the fatal downward pull by the dark antagonistic forces, through regular meditation. Check the aimless wanderings of the mind through clear and orderly thinking. Hear not the false whispers of the lower mind. Turn your inner gaze to the divine centre. Do not be afraid of the severe setbacks that you will encounter in your journey. Be brave. March on boldly till you finally rest in your centre of eternal bliss. May the blessings of the great yogis be upon you all!

(a) ***Subtle Obstacles***

You may have aspiration for the Truth, you may be endowed with devotion and you may possess a will to overcome the obstacles and hostile forces, but if the little ego asserts or persists, if the external personality has not consented to change or transformation, you cannot have rapid progress in the spiritual path. The ego will have its own ways and inclinations.

The lower nature must be thoroughly regenerated. The habitual lower personality of the aspirant must be entirely changed. If this is not done, any spiritual experience or power is of no value. If this little ego or human personality persists in retaining its petty, limited, selfish, ignoble, false and stupid human consciousness, no amount of austerity or sadhana will bear fruit. This means that you do not really thirst for God-realisation. It is nothing more than idle curiosity. The aspirant says to the preceptor: "I want to practise yoga. I want to enter into nirvikalpa samadhi, I want to sit at your feet," but he does not want to change his lower nature and old habits. He wants to have his own way and old habits, old character, behaviour and conduct.

Any partial or temporary elevation or slight occasional inspiration during some exalted moments, any momentary spiritual opening within without any true or radical transformation of the lower nature or habitual little personality, is of no practical value.

This change of the lower nature is not easy. The force of habit is ever strong and inveterate. It demands great strength of will. The aspirant often feels helpless against the force of old habits. He will have to develop his sattva and will to a considerable degree by regular japa, kirtan, meditation, untiring selfless service and satsang. He must introspect and find out his own defects and weaknesses. He must live under the guidance of his guru. The guru finds out his defects and points out suitable ways to eradicate them.

If the lower nature or old personality becomes obstinate and self-assertive, and if it is supported and justified by the lower mind and will, then the matter becomes very serious. He becomes incorrigible, turbulent, unruly, arrogant and impertinent. He breaks all the rules and disciplines.

Such an aspirant clings to his old self. He has not surrendered himself either to the Lord or to a personal guru. He is ever ready to revolt against any man, even for a little thing. He will never obey and he is not willing to receive any spiritual instructions. He is self-willed, self-satisfied and self-sufficient. He is not ready to accept his weaknesses and defects. He thinks that he is a flawless man of great achievements. He leads a happy-go-lucky life.

He asserts and follows his own crude and egoistic ideas, desires, fancies or convenience. He claims the right to follow his own human unregenerate or diabolical nature with all its untruthfulness, ignorance, selfishness and rudeness, and to express all this impure stuff in speech, action and behaviour.

He argues vehemently, defends himself in a variety of ways and paints himself in special colours. He professes one thing and practises another thing. He tries to force his wrong view and opinions on others. If others are not willing to accept his wrong views he is ready to fight against them. He at once stands up in revolt. He asserts that his views only are correct, and that those who try to oppose his views are unjust, unreasonable and uneducated. He tries to persuade and convince others that his views are very reasonable and that his ways of action are the right ways of action for all, and that his ways and views are in full accordance with the science of yoga. Marvellous people they are! Really the world is in great need of such wonderful, useful people in great abundance!

If he were really frank with himself and straightforward to his guru, if he really desired to improve himself, he would begin to realise his folly and defects and to recognize the source and nature of the resistance. He would soon be on the direct road to correct and change himself. But he prefers to conceal his old nature and his old diabolical thoughts under some justification, excuse or other shelter.

The self-assertive arrogant seeker tries to make himself a figure in society. He wants to maintain a position of prestige. He poses as a great yogi who possesses several yoga powers. He claims the part of a superior seeker or an advanced yogi, with great knowledge and experience of nirvikalpa samadhi. These defects of vanity, arrogance and rajasic temperament are present in most human natures on a smaller scale.

He is unwilling to obey the orders of his guru and respect elders and superiors. He is ever ready to break discipline. He has got his own ideas and impulses. The habit of disobedience and disregard of discipline is ingrained in him. He sometimes promises that he will be obedient to his guru and elders, but the action done is frequently the very opposite of his promise. Non-observance of discipline is indeed a serious obstacle to the sadhana. He sets the worst possible example to others.

He who is disobedient, who is not straightforward to his guru and who cannot open his heart to his preceptor or spiritual guide, cannot be benefited by the help of a guru. He remains stuck in his own self-created mire of mud and cannot progress in the divine path.

He practises dissimulation. He plays the hypocrite, pretends falsely and exaggerates things. He makes false use of his imagination. He conceals his thoughts, distorts and falsifies. He positively denies certain facts. He tells terrible, deliberate lies to cover up his disobedience or wrong course of action, to keep up his position and to have his own ways or indulge in his old habits and desires.

He, himself, does not know what he is doing exactly, as his intellect is clouded by impurity. He does not know what he means and does not mean what he says.

He never admits his faults and defects. Even if anyone points out his defects for correcting him, he feels extremely annoyed. He wages war against him. There is much of the brute in him.

He has got the most dangerous habit of self-justification. He always tries to justify himself, to stick to his ideas, to maintain his own position or course of action by bringing in all kinds of foolish, inconsistent arguments, clever tricks or devices. He misuses his intellect to support his own foolish actions. (These defects are common, in some to a lesser and in others to a greater degree.)

If he feels even a little bit for his present deplorable condition, if he attempts to show even a slight improvement, if there is even a little receptive attitude, he can be corrected. He can have progress in the path of yoga. If he is obstinate and pig-headed, if he is absolutely self-willed, if he deliberately shuts his eyes or hardens his heart against the Truth or the Divine Light, no one can help him. What a great pity! His lot is lamentable indeed!

The aspirant should give his full consent with all his being to the change of his lower nature into divine nature; he must make a total, unreserved, ungrudging self-surrender to the Lord or guru; he must have the true spirit and right abiding attitude; he must make the right persistent endeavours — then only will the real change come. Mere nodding the head, mere professing, mere saying "Yes, yes," will not serve any purpose. It will not make anyone a superman or yogi.

As soon as an aspirant gets some spiritual experience or siddhis he is puffed up with vanity and pride. He thinks too much of himself. He separates himself from others. He treats others with contempt. He cannot mix with others. If anyone has some moral qualifications — such as a spirit of service or self-sacrifice or celibacy — he will say: "I have been practising celibacy without a lapse for the last twelve years. Who is pure like myself? I lived on leaves and gram only, for four years. I have done service in an ashram for ten years. No-one can serve like me." Just as worldly people are puffed up with the pride of wealth, so also sadhus and aspirants are puffed up with their moral qualifications. This kind of pride is also a serious obstacle in the path of God-realisation. It must be eradicated thoroughly. As long as a man boasts of himself, so long is he the same little jiva only. He cannot have divinity.

There are as many fashions in sadhus as there are in worldly persons. Just as hypocrisy prevails in worldly persons, so also it manifests in aspirants, sadhus and sannyasins who have not completely purified their lower nature. They pretend to be what they are not in reality. They pose as big mahatmas and siddha purushas (perfected masters) when they do not even know the alpha-beta of yoga or spirituality. They put on the serious Sunday-faces which some Christian missionaries sometimes assume on Sabbath days. They cheat others. They boast and brag too much. They do mischief wherever they go. They practise hypocrisy to get respect, honour, good food and clothing and to cheat credulous simpletons. There is no greater crime than trading in religion. This is a capital sin. Householders can be excused, but we cannot excuse the aspirants and religious seekers who are treading the path of spirituality and who have renounced everything for God-realisation. Religious hypocrisy is more dangerous than the hypocrisy of worldly persons. A long drastic course of treatment is needed for its eradication. A religious hypocrite is very far from God. He cannot dream of God-realisation.

One can renounce even one's wife, son or property, but it is difficult to renounce name and fame. This is a great obstacle in the path of God-realisation, and brings downfall in the end. This does not allow the aspirant to march forward in the spiritual path. He becomes a slave of respect and honour. As soon as the aspirant gets some purity and ethical progress, ignorant people flock to him to pay homage and salutations. They imagine that the mahatma has got siddhis and that through his grace they can get children and wealth, and roots and herbs for the removal of diseases. They always approach a sadhu with various motives. The aspirant, through bad association, loses his dispassion and discretion. Attachment and desires crop up in his mind. He gets puffed up with pride and thinks he is a great realised soul. He eventually becomes a slave of his admirers. He cannot notice his slow downfall. The moment he mixes freely with householders he loses what little he had gained during eight or ten years. He cannot influence the public now. The admirers also leave him because they do not find any solace or influence in his company.

Therefore, an aspirant should hide himself always. Nobody should know what sort of sadhana he is doing. He should never attempt to exhibit any siddhi. He should be very humble and should pass for quite an ordinary man. He should not accept any rich present from householders as he will be affected by the bad thoughts of those who offer presents. He should never think that he is superior to anybody, but should always treat others with respect. He should not treat others with contempt. Then only will respect come by itself. He should treat respect, honour, name and fame as dung or poison, and should wear disrespect and dishonour as a golden necklace. Then only will he reach the goal safely.

Building ashrams and making disciples are also stumbling blocks in the path of God-realisation. The aspirant becomes another sort of house-holder. He develops institutional egoism. He gets attached to the ashram and the disciples. He gets 'mineness' for the buildings and people. He has the same cares, worries and anxieties of running the ashram and the magazine, and feeding his disciples. He develops slave-mentality and weak will. Thoughts of the ashram revolve in his mind when he is in a dying condition. Sometimes an ashram is nicely conducted by the 'spiritual head' of the institution while he is alive. When he passes away, the disciples who are petty-minded fight amongst themselves. The ashram becomes a fighting centre afterwards. Cases are going on in the courts. Ashram owners have to flatter the donors and appeal for funds very often. How can thoughts of God remain in the mind when one has his mind fixed on collection of money and developing the ashram?

Those who have started an ashram may say, "We are now having religious classes daily. We feed poor people in various ways. We are training religious students." It is quite true that an ashram that is run by a selfless dynamic yogi and a realised jivanmukta is a dynamic centre of spirituality. It is a spiritual nucleus for the spiritual uplift of thousands of people. Such centres are needed in all parts of the world. Such ashrams can do immense spiritual good to the country, but such ideal ashrams with ideal spiritual heads to run the institutions are very very rare nowadays.

The founders of the ashram in course of time unconsciously become slaves of worship and adoration. Maya works in various ways. How can a man who has the attitude that he should be worshipped as an incarnation of God serve the public? Workers are petty-minded. They fight amongst themselves for trifling matters and disturb the peaceful atmosphere of the place. Where is peace in the ashram then? How can outsiders who visit the ashram to get peace, enjoy it there?

The founders of ashrams should live on daily alms from outside. They should lead an ideal life of absolute self-sacrifice, a life of ideal simplicity, like the late Kalikamlivala of Rishikesh who carried a water-pot on his head for the ashram and who lived on alms from outside. Then only can they do real good to the people. Founders of ashrams should never appeal to the public for funds. It brings great discredit to those who tread the path of God-realisation. It is another way of respectable begging. The habit of begging destroys the subtle, sensitive nature of the intellect and those who appeal for funds frequently do not know what they are exactly doing; just as the lawyers and those who visit houses of ill-fame have lost the discriminative faculty of finding out the truth from untruth, purity from impurity. Begging kills one's soul-force. It produces a wrong impression on the minds of the public. Where is freedom if one begs? People have lost faith in the founders of ashrams. If anything comes by itself, without asking, it can be accepted. Then, you can do some work independently.

It is very difficult to get good workers for the ashrams. Then why do you bother about building them when you have neither money, nor workers, nor dynamic spiritual force? Keep quiet. Do meditation. Evolve yourself. Mind your own business. Reform yourself first. How can you help others when you yourself grope in darkness, when you are blind? How can a blind man lead another blind man? Both will fall in a deep abyss and break their legs.

Power, name, fame and wealth stiffen the ego. They strengthen the personality. Hence, renounce them if you want to attain immortality and eternal peace.

Lastly, I have to point out that though we have not got at present the first class type of ashrams, yet there are many good ashrams of the second class type that are run by noble, pure souls, who do great service to the country in a variety of ways, bring out valuable philosophical books and train students in the practice of meditation and yoga. They render selfless service. Their works are to be greatly congratulated, indeed. It is the duty of rich people to spontaneously render them financial help and help of all sorts. May God bestow on them inner spiritual strength to disseminate their message of love, service and peace! My silent homage and salutations to these rare, exalted selfless souls!

(b) ***Psychic Obstacles***

Experiences vary in different individuals. The experience of one man may not be the same as that of another man. Many erroneously believe that they have realised the Self when they get some experiences, such as visions etc. They stop their spiritual practices and try to move with the public, to preach and to work for world solidarity. This is a serious blunder. This is not realisation at all. These experiences are all simple encouragements to convince you of a higher spiritual life and push you in your systematic and incessant practice with zeal and enthusiasm. You will have to ignore these things and drive them away just as you did with worldly objects. You must have samadhi as the goal.

Experiences may appear in some persons within a few days, and in others within six or nine months. It depends upon the state of the mind and degree of concentration. Some persons may not have such experience, but they will be progressing in the spiritual path. Visions and experiences come and go. They are not in themselves the culminating point. He who attaches much importance to these small visions does not march swiftly on the path. Therefore abandon the idea of these experiences. The final experience, intuitional and direct, of the Supreme alone, is the real, true one.

Sometimes elementals appear during meditation. They are strange figures, some with long teeth, some with big faces, some with big bellies, some with faces on the belly, some with faces on the head. They are inhabitants of the spirit world. They are the attendants of Lord Siva. They have terrifying forms, but they do not cause any harm at all, they simply appear on the stage. They come to test your strength and courage. They can do nothing; they cannot stand before a pure, ethical aspirant. Repetition of OM will keep them at a distance. You must be fearless. A coward is absolutely unfit for the spiritual line. Develop courage by constantly feeling that you are the Atman. Deny and negate the body-idea. Practise deep intense meditation always.

Rise above the visions. They are a hindrance on the path to samadhi or God-realisation. When you see a vision the mind will be fixed on them throughout the day instead of on God. Avoid these visions and the thought of them. Be indifferent. Substitute the thought of the Lord.

Various psychic powers (siddhis) come to the yogi who has controlled his senses, prana and mind. They also are stumbling blocks. They allure the yoga students. Sadhaks should be very careful, they should shun them ruthlessly as mere trifles or worthless things. Do not think of them. Clairvoyance and clairaudience are not worth having when far greater illumination and peace are possible without the siddhis than with them.

Desire for powers will act like puffs of air which may blow out the lamp of yoga. Any slackness in feeding it, due to carelessness or selfish desires for siddhis, will blow out the little spiritual light that the yogi has kindled after so much struggle, and will hurl him down into the deep abyss of ignorance. He cannot rise up again to the original height which he had ascended on the hill of yoga. Temptations are simply waiting to overwhelm the unwary student. Temptations of the astral, mental and heavenly worlds are more powerful than the earthly temptations.

Perfected beings, gods and others surrounded Uddalaka. Divine nymphs flocked to him in great numbers. He was offered a heavenly kingdom. Uddalaka totally declined to accept anything. The ladies tried to entice him by their wily charms. They told him: "Please take your seat in the celestial car. It will take you to heaven. Here are the springs that confer immortality. Here are celestial nymphs to serve you. Here is the wish-fulfilling jewel. Your rare austerity has brought all these for thee.'' Uddalaka, the brave, resisted all temptations and shone in effulgence. (If one gets a glimpse of Brahman for a second even, he will not long for sensual objects.) After six months he awoke from his samadhi. He would spend, at one sitting, days, months and even years in deep samadhi, and then would wake up.

If you practise regular meditation and concentration you are bound to get some psychic powers. You should not use these powers for base and selfish purposes, for gaining some material end or other. You will then face a downfall. You will be punished by Mother Nature.

Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Every wrong action is bound to cause a reaction. I again and again seriously warn you. Beware! Power, sex, money and erudition act as powerful intoxicants. The possessor does not know exactly what he is doing. His intellect becomes turbid and his understanding gets clouded. You will not be tempted by these powers if you are established in the practice of yama or self-restraint.

When you are lying in your bed, sometimes a big light will pass along your forehead. As soon as you try to behold the light by meditating in the sitting posture, it may disappear. You may ask: ''How is it that I failed to catch the light by exertion, whereas it comes by itself when I am lying down without any effort?'' The reason is that you lose the concentration as soon as you sit for meditation due to the entry of rajas with the idea: 'I am doing'.

When you experience bliss in meditation some peculiar sensation will disturb you, and with this disturbance the sublime bliss will disappear. During meditation sattva increases, but rajas is ever trying to overcome sattva. You feel the peculiar sensation of a disturbance on account of the entry of rajas. The thought of work that you will have to do may also cause a disturbing sensation. Forget all works and say to the mind: ''I have nothing more to do, I have done everything.'' When sattva increases through enquiry, vigorous sadhana and greater dispassion, this disturbance will vanish and you will experience deep meditation. The bliss also will last for a long time.

Even though you have conquered sleep and distraction by repeated practice, dispassion and contemplation on God, yet the mind will not enter into a state of perfect balance or serenity. It will be in an intermediate stage. The mind is still not freed from attachment, which is the seed of all its activity in the direction of external objects. There is still lurking passion or hidden desires. You will have to restrain the mind again and again by enquiry, and do rigorous meditation. Finally, you must rest yourself in asamprajnata or seedless samadhi (nirbija samadhi).

Rasavada is super-sensual bliss that comes from lower savikalpa samadhi. The seeker who has experienced this imagines that he has reached the final destination and gives up his sadhana. Just as man digs the earth very deep to find out the most precious hidden treasure and gems, just as a man is not satisfied with the petty things he has found just beneath the surface of the ground, so also the seeker should continue his sadhana till he gets the unconditioned state, or highest goal of life. He should never be satisfied with lower experiences. He should compare his experiences with the highest experiences of sages that are described in the *Upanishads* and find out whether they exactly tally with them or not. He should exert till he reaches the seventh jnana stage, till he becomes a full-blown jnani. He should struggle till he gets the inner feeling of 'I have obtained all desires, I have done everything, I know and have attained everything. There is nothing more to be known, nothing more to be obtained.'

This obstacle prevents the seeker from enjoying the highest nirvikalpa bliss. Right thought, discrimination, prayer, pranayama, further earnestness and struggle in meditation will remove the above obstacle.

Sometimes the mind remains quiet for a short time. You will find neither attraction (raga) nor repulsion (dvesha) in the mind. It occurs in the waking state. The aspirant mistakes this for samadhi. This is a neutral state of the mind. This is an obstacle in the path of God-realisation. He should overcome this state of mind by careful introspection and vigorous meditation. A seeker through experience and acute acumen can find out exactly the nature of the various states of the mind. He should adopt effective methods to control these states. Mere study of books will not help him very much, but experience and practice will do him much real good.

There is also a state of stupefaction arising from fear or wonder. It is akin to the previous state. This is also another obstacle on the path. When you experience some wonderful astounding news the mind gets stunned for some time. This is stabdha avastha. There is no perfect awareness. The mind remains like a log of wood in a state of inertia. It becomes unfit for active meditation. When these states prevail there is heaviness of body and lack of cheerfulness. The mind also becomes dull for the time being. The student can find out these states by these symptoms. An intelligent seeker who practises meditation daily can easily find out the different states into which the mind passes. A beginner finds meditation dry in the beginning, but an advanced student who has an intelligent and comprehensive understanding of the nature of the mind and its operations and the laws of the mental plane, will find meditation very interesting. The more he meditates the more he gains control of the mind. He can understand the nature of the thought waves and the different mental states. He can control them. He will actually feel that he is gaining inner spiritual strength and that he cannot be easily swayed by the mind now.

You must be on the alert. You must be vigilant and circumspect. You will have to get over these impediments step by step.

You will have to cross the void also. What appears to you as a void when all the vrittis have perished is not really a void. This is the unmanifest, the invisible. Cross this void also. It will try to overpower you. You have nothing to see and nothing to hear. You are left alone now, there is none to cheer you. You will have to depend on yourself. Presence of mind is needed now at this critical juncture. Draw courage and strength from within.

O my dear aspirants! I send you the thought-currents of peace from the peaceful atmosphere of the sacred Himalayas, the abode of sages. God is the embodiment of peace. Scriptures emphatically declare: "*This Self is peace.*"

Desire is the greatest enemy of peace. It causes distractions of various sorts. There is no peace for him who has no concentration, and there can be no happiness for the unpeaceful. In the supreme peace all pains, sorrows, miseries and tribulations will vanish for ever.

Children of Immortality! Plod on. Push on. Do not look backward. Forget the past. Forget the body and world, but forget not the centre, forget not the source. A glorious brilliant future is awaiting you. Purify. Serve. Love. Give. Live in OM. Feel always and everywhere the indwelling, all-pervading Presence. Realise the Self. Rest in the magnanimous ocean of peace, in the stupendous sea of stillness. Drink the nectar of immortality. May the indwelling Presence be your centre, ideal and goal. May joy, bliss, immortality, peace, glory and splendour abide with you for ever!

I have placed before you in detail all the obstacles that stand in the way of realisation of God and have suggested various effective methods to remove these obstacles. Stand up now like an undaunted spiritual soldier in the spiritual battlefield. Become a spiritual hero of great intrepidity and unique chivalry. Get over the obstacles fearlessly one by one and manifest divine glory, splendour, purity and sanctity. Wait patiently with a calm and serene mind for results. Do not be hasty, rash and impetuous. Allow proper time for regeneration and renovation. Do not despair. Wear the coat-of-arms of dispassion, wield the shield of discrimination and hold the banner of faith. March boldly and cheerfully. Stop not till you drink the elixir of immortality to your heart's content, stop not till you enter the immortal realms of eternal sunshine, undecaying beauty, unfading ecstasy, supreme bliss, infinite joy, unalloyed felicity and unbroken peace. This is your goal, your final destination. You can take eternal rest now. This is your highest aim and purpose of life. Rest now in everlasting peace, friends! Cheer yourselves. Share this rare bliss with your brothers. Elevate them. This noble and stupendous selfless work is awaiting you now in the grand plan. Fulfil the divine Will and become a Buddha of undecaying fame. Salutations unto you all!

When a bee finds that its feet are stuck in the honey, it slowly licks them several times and then flies away with joy. Even so, extricate yourself from the mind's sticking and clinging to this body owing to attraction and attachment, through dispassion and meditation. Fly away with joy from this cage of flesh and bone to the source, Brahman or the Self.

No more words. Enough of discussions and heated debates. Retire into a solitary room. Close your eyes. Have deep, silent meditation. Feel His presence. Repeat His name OM with fervour, joy and love. Fill your heart with love. Destroy the ideas, fancies and desires, whims and thoughts when they arise on the surface of the mind. Withdraw the wandering mind and fix it upon the Lord. Now the meditation will become deep and intense. Do not open your eyes.

Do not stir from your seat. Merge in Him. Dive deep into the innermost recesses of the heart. Plunge into the shining Atman within. Drink the nectar of immortality. Enjoy the silence now. I shall leave you there alone.

EXPERIENCES IN MEDITATION

During deep meditation you will forget the external world first and then the body. You will enjoy a sort of higher type of indescribable peace, but it will take a long time to get real spiritual experiences, to merge the mind in your chosen object of meditation or to get over body-consciousness completely. Be patient. Persevere. You will succeed.

During deep meditation you will have no idea of time. You will not hear any sounds. You will have no idea of environment. You will forget your name and all sorts of relationship with others. You will enjoy peace and bliss.

In the beginning you will remain in the state of bliss for some time. Then you will come down. By constant practice of incessant meditation you can continue to remain in that exalted state for ever. Later on the body idea completely vanishes. You will have no consciousness of your body. You will have equanimity of mind. There will be stoppage of up-going and down-going sensations. The consciousness of egoism will also gradually vanish. You will experience inexplicable joy and indescribable happiness. Gradually, reasoning and reflection also will cease. You will rest in samadhi.

Physical Sensations

The feeling of rising up during meditation is a sign that indicates that you are going above body-consciousness. You will feel a peculiar ananda (bliss) also when you experience this feeling. In the beginning this feeling of rising up will last for a minute only.

After a minute you will feel that you have come back to normal consciousness again. In dream you will feel that you are trying to come out of your body. You will feel great pressure at the end of the spine.

During meditation you will get into rapture or ecstasy. This is of five kinds — the lesser thrill, momentary rapture, flooding rapture, transporting rapture and all-pervading rapture. The lesser thrill will raise the hairs of the body (like goose-flesh). The momentary rapture is like the production of lightning, moment by moment. Like waves breaking on the sea-shore, the flooding rapture descends rapidly over the body and breaks. Transporting rapture is strong and lifts the body up to the extent of launching it into the air. When the all-pervading rapture arises, the whole body is completely surcharged and blown like a full bladder.

When you meditate with closed eyes you will see in your body two luminous strings in which are placed luminous lotuses at intervals; and the strings pass through the image of your chosen deity seated in one of these lotuses in the region of the heart.

Continue your meditation. You will feel that your anus and a spot in the top of the head are connected by these strings. You will experience a great upward pull on the anus and the lower end of the spine. Sometimes you will feel great tingling sensation at the lower end of the spine. You will feel as though some great change in your system will happen soon. You may feel that you will lose your physical consciousness. Be not afraid. Be bold and courageous. You will have rare spiritual experiences, you will have cosmic vision. Do not open your eyes now. You will come back to normal consciousness. Keep steady and wait for further experience.

It does not matter much whether you return to body consciousness or not. All our attempts are mainly directed towards getting over this body-consciousness and being one with the higher spiritual consciousness. However, we are used to certain limitations. When these limitations suddenly drop away we feel that there is no definite base left to stand upon. That is the reason why we are afraid when we go above body-consciousness. It is a novel experience. Courage is needed. Courage is an indispensable requisite. The scriptures say: "*This Atman can hardly be attained by weak (timid) persons*." All sorts of forces have to be encountered on the way. A dacoit or an anarchist can easily realise God because he is fearless. Only a push in the right direction is necessary for him.

Feeling of Separation

One day, after a course of sadhana for a long time, you will feel that you have separated yourself from the body. You will have immense joy mixed with fear — joy in the possession of a new, light astral body and fear owing to the entry in a foreign, unknown plane. At the very outset the new consciousness is very rudimentary in the new plane, just as in the case of a pup with newly opened eyes on the eighth or tenth day on the physical plane. You will only feel that you have a light airy body and will perceive a rotating, vibratory, limited astral atmosphere with illumination of golden lights, objects, beings, etc. You may feel that you are rotating or floating in the air and consequently there will be the fear of falling. You will never fall; but the new experience of subtlety generates novel feelings and sensations in the beginning. How you leave the body remains unknown at the outset.

Sometimes you will feel an invisible help (possibly from the ishta devata) when you are actually pushed from the physical body into the new plane. That invisible power assists in your separation from the body and going above body-consciousness. You will have to mark carefully all these operations. You will be suddenly startled when you have completely separated and when you enter into the new plane, sometimes with a blue-coloured sphere all around, sometimes with partial illumination mixed with darkness, while at other times with extremely brilliant golden yellow diffused illumination. The new joy is inexpressible and indescribable. You will have to actually feel and experience it yourself. You will be unaware of how you left the body, but you will be fully conscious of your returning. You will feel as if you gently glide on a very, very smooth surface; as if you enter smoothly and gently through a small hole or fine tube with an airy, light body. You will have an airy, ethereal feeling. Just as air enters through the crevices of a window, you will enter with the new astral body into the physical body. I think I have expressed the idea lucidly.

When you have returned you can markedly differentiate the life in the gross and subtle planes. There is an intense craving to regain the new consciousness and to remain in that state always. You are not able to stay for a period longer than three, five or ten minutes in the new region. Further, you can hardly leave the body at will through simple willing, in the beginning. By chance, through effort, you may be able to separate from the body once in a month in the course of sadhana. If you plod on with patience, perseverance and firmness, you will be able to leave the body at will and stay for a longer time in the new plane with the new subtle body. You will be quite safe from identification with the body. You have made conquest of the false identification with the body only if you can leave the body at will and only if you are able to stay in the new region for two or three hours. Your position is quite secure then and not otherwise. The vow of silence, solitude and living alone are necessary to achieve this end.

After continuous hard practice you will be able to separate yourself from the body very frequently. A habit is established. As soon as you silence the thoughts and calm the mind, the mental habit of slipping from the physical body supervenes automatically. There is no difficulty then. The mind enters the new groove and appears on a new stage or platform.

Astral Journey

Simply by mere willing you can travel to any place you like with the astral body (astral travel, astral journey) and there materialise by drawing the necessary materials either from the ego or the universal store-house. The process is very simple to occultists and yogis who know the rationale, the detailed technique of the various operations, albeit it seems extraordinary to poor mundane creatures with diverse emotions, passions and attachments. Thought-reading and thought-transference also can be quite easily performed by those who can function with the astral body. Concentrated mental rays can penetrate opaque walls, just as X-rays pass through bones.

You first separate yourself from the body, then you identify yourself with the mind and then you function on the mental plane with this fine body, just as you do on this earth plane. Through concentration you rise above body-consciousness; through meditation you rise above mind; and finally, through samadhi, you become one with Brahman. These are the three important, internal means in the achievement of final beatitude.

Visions

The beings and objects with whom you are in touch during the early period of meditation belong to the astral world. They are similar to human beings minus the physical overcoat. They have desires, cravings, love, hatred, etc., just as human beings have. They have a fine body. They can move about freely. They have powers of materialisation, dematerialisation, multiplying and clairvoyant vision of an inferior order. The lustrous forms are higher devatas of mental or higher planes, who come down to give you darshan and encourage you. Various powers manifest in lustrous forms. Adore them. Worship them. Do mental puja as soon as they give you darshan. Angels are beings of mental or higher planes. They also appear before your mind's eye.

When you get these experiences, when you behold these visions, you will feel a peculiar, indescribable bliss. Do not get false contentment. Do not stop your sadhana and meditation, thinking that you have attained the highest realisation. Do not attach much importance to these visions. You have attained only the first degree of concentration. The highest goal or realisation is the profound silence or supreme peace wherein all thoughts cease and you become identical with the supreme Self.

Occasionally during meditation you may behold a dazzling light with abrupt motion. You may behold a head of marvellous form, of the colour of a flame, red as fire, and very awful to look at. It has three wings of marvellous length and breadth, white as a dazzling cloud. At times they beat terribly, and again will be still. The head never utters a word, but remains altogether still.

Sometimes you will see an infinite blue sky, an ethereal space. You will see yourself in the blue space as a black dot. Your form will appear in the centre of the light sometimes. Sometimes, you will notice highly vibratory, rotating particles in the light. You will see physical forms, children, men and women, sages with beards, perfected souls (siddhas) and lustrous forms also. Perfected souls and sages, etc., appear to encourage you. You will find a huge collection of devatas and celestial ladies with various musical instruments in their hands. You will see beautiful flower gardens, fine palatial buildings, rivers, mountains, golden temples — sceneries so lovely and picturesque as cannot be adequately described.

Visions are either subjective or objective, your own mental reactions or realities of finer planes of matter. The universe consists of planes of matter of various grades of density. Rhythmical vibrations of subtle elements in various degrees give rise to the formation of various planes. Each plane has its beings and things. Visions may be of these things or beings or they may be purely imaginary. They may be a crystallization of your own intense thinking. You must discriminate in yoga practices. Reason and common-sense must be used throughout.

Don't waste your time in looking at these visions. This is only a curiosity. These are all encouragements to convince you of the existence of super-physical, metaphysical realities and the solid existence of Brahman. Drive out these pictures. They are all obstacles in the way. Fix yourself on the goal. Advance. Proceed seriously and energetically. If you are timid you cannot march further. Draw power and courage from the Atman within, the inexhaustible source. You will come across very good spirits also. They will help you a lot on your onward march.

Aspirants are eager to get spiritual experiences soon. When they get a flash of illumination they are afraid. They are awfully alarmed when they go above the body consciousness. They entertain a passing wonder whether they will come back again, or not. Why should they be afraid at all?

Vision of God

You will sometimes see a vast golden bright light all around. Within the light you will see your ishta devata (chosen deity — e.g. Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Siva, Jesus, etc.) in front. Sometimes you will see yourself within the light.

You may see your chosen deity as big as a mountain shining like the sun. You may see the figure while eating, drinking or working. When you enjoy the bliss of this vision you will experience no taste of food while eating. You will hear the continuous ringing of the veena. You will see the blazing light of the sun.

Sometimes you will feel the presence of your deity near you. The image will begin to appear as living when you practise regular meditation.

When you advance in meditation you can see your deity in physical form. Lord Vishnu will give you darshan with four hands, Lord Krishna will appear before you with flute in His hands, Rama with bow and arrow and Lord Siva with trident and drum. While meditating with closed eyes on the image placed in your heart you will find that the image is becoming more and more luminous. Even with open eyes you will see a bright sun or moon and lights of different colours.

Sometimes the Lord will come before you in the form of a beggar or a sick man with dirty rags. He may appear before you in the form of a coolie. You must have the keen sense to detect Him. Your hair will stand on end when you meet Him. He appears in your dreams. Lord Ganesha comes in the form of an elephant in dreams. Devi appears in the form of a girl in your dreams.

Lights in Meditation

Various kinds of lights manifest during meditation owing to concentration. In the begining a bright white light the size of a pin's point will appear in the forehead in the space between the two eyebrows, which corresponds approximately to the ajna chakra of the astral body. When the eyes are closed you will notice different coloured lights — white, yellow, red, smokey, blue, green, mixed —flashes like lightning, like fire, burning charcoal, fire-flies, moon, sun and stars. These lights appear in the mental space. These are all subtle elemental lights. Each subtle element has its own specific colour. The subtle element for earth has a yellow-coloured light; water has a white-coloured light; fire has a red-coloured light; wind has a smokey light; space has a blue light. Yellow and white lights are very commonly seen. Red and blue lights are rarely noticeable. Frequently, there is a combination of white and yellow lights.

In the beginning small balls of white light float about before the mind's eye. When you first observe this, be assured that the mind is becoming more steady and that you are progressing in concentration. After some months the size of the light will increase and you will see a full blaze of white light, bigger than the sun. In the beginning these lights are not steady. They come and disappear immediately. They flash out from above the forehead and from the sides. They cause peculiar sensations of extreme joy and happiness and there is an intense desire for a vision of these lights. When you have a steady and systematic practice of two to three hours in the morning and two to three hours at night these lights will appear more frequently and remain steady for a long time.

As soon as you retire for sleep, just as you are drowsy and going to transcend the physical consciousness, these lights manifest themselves without any exertion on your part. Also in the morning before you get up in the transitional stage — half sleep, half awake — you will get these lights by themselves, without effort.

The vision of the lights is a great encouragement in sadhana. It impels you to stick steadily to meditation. It gives you strong faith also in super-physical matters. The appearance of the lights denotes that you are transcending the physical consciousness. You are in a semi-conscious state when the lights appear. You are between two planes. You must not shake the body when these lights manifest. You must be perfectly steady in the posture. You must breathe very very slowly. For those who concentrate on the space between the eyebrows, the light appears there, while for others who concentrate on the top of the head, the sahasrara chakra, the light manifests on the top of the head. The light is so powerful and dazzling sometimes that you have to withdraw yourself from looking at it and break the meditation. Some people become afraid and do not know what to do, how to proceed further. By constant practice the mind engaged in concentration will become used to it and the fear will vanish. Go on with the practice.

Some people concentrate on the heart, some on the space between the eyebrows and some on the top of the head. It is a question of personal taste. It is easy to control the mind by concentrating on the former. If you are used to fixing it there, stick to it always. Don't make frequent changes. Steadiness is very necessary.

Divine light comes not through open doors, but only through narrow slits. The aspirant sees the ray as a sunbeam passing through a chink into a dark room. It is like a flash of lightning. This sudden illumination chokes all sounds of words. The aspirant is spell-bound in ecstasy and awe. He trembles with love and awe, just as Arjuna did when he saw the universal form of Lord Krishna. So bright and glorious is the light environing the Divine, that the initiate is dazzled and bewildered.

During deep meditation you may behold a huge pillar of light. You will see infinite light and you will merge yourself in it. You will be struck with awe and wonder.

Various persons get various spiritual experiences. There cannot be a common experience for all. It depends upon the temperament, mode of sadhana, place of concentration and various other factors. Some hear melodious sounds in the ears, some see lights, some get spiritual bliss and some get both lights *and* bliss.

To behold various kinds of colours and lights during meditation is not the goal. You will have to merge the mind in That which is the source for all these lights and colours.

Anahata Sounds

Anahata sounds or melodies are the mystic sounds heard by the yogi at the beginning of his cycle of meditation. The anahata sound is due to the vibration of prana in the heart. This is a sign of purification of the nadis or astral currents due to pranayama. The sounds can also be heard after the uttering of mantra 'hamsah soham' a hundred thousand times. The sounds are heard through the right ear, with or without closing the ears, but they are more distinct when heard through closed ears. The ears can be closed by introducing the two thumbs into the ears through the process of yoni mudra. Sit on padma or siddhasana, close the ears with the thumbs and hear the sounds very attentively. Occasionally you can hear the sounds through the left ear also. Practise to hear from the right ear only. Why do you hear through the right ear only or hear distinctly through the right ear? Because of the solar nadi, pingala, on the right side of the nose.

Just as a hunter catches deer by spreading a snare, so also the yoga student catches the mind by the snare of anahata sound heard in his right ear. The sweet melodious sounds that are heard in the ear first attract the mind. Then they bind it and eventually annihilate the mind. The mind is absorbed or dissolved in the nada (sounds). Binding the mind means rendering the mind quite steady. To kill the mind is to make the mind absorbed in the sound. Then it cannot run toward the objects.

The sound that is heard is of ten kinds. The first is like the sound of the word 'chini'; the second is like 'chini-chini'; the third is the sound of a bell; the fourth is that of a conch; the fifth is that of a lute; the sixth is the sound of cymbals; the seventh is that of the flute; the eighth is that of the drum; the ninth is that of a double drum, and the tenth is like that of thunder.

The mind can be fixed on any of these sounds. This also will lead to samadhi. Sometimes you will hear the melodious sound of OM during meditation and you will see the form of your guru.

A student in the path of vedanta ignores these sounds and lights. He meditates on the significance of the great declarations of the *Upanishads* by negating all forms. "*The sun does not shine there, nor do the moon and the stars, nor shines this lightning and much less this fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him; by His light all these shine.*" He meditates also like this: "*The air does not blow there. The fire does not burn there. There is neither sound nor touch, neither smell nor colour, neither mind nor prana in that homogeneous essence. I am the blissful Siva, I am the blissful Siva.*"

Experience of Sadhaks

Here are some actual experiences of sadhaks:

> I had a peculiar sensation near my solar plexus in meditation. I noticed a whirling sensation like a flywheel rotating around. Then I came across some peculiar sights. I saw with the physical eyes a sort of white or blue hue of light all around people's heads and also on the surface of buildings. When I gazed at the open grand expanse of sky in the day time, I noticed a white light moving hither and thither. When I work intently in my office, white shining lights flash across my eyes. Sometimes little sparks of light are noticed on my books. This gives me a peculiar joy and I begin to chant the name of the Lord: 'Sri Rama Jaya Rama Jaya Jaya Rama'. Nowadays when I am cycling to my office I see a round light-like ball which is visible till I reach my destination. The same thing appears at times when I gaze at the beautiful sky......'S.'

> I meditated for five hours daily for a month in Gangotri. One day I had a great deal of dejection for two hours. I could not find any peace. I found it difficult to bear the mood of dejection. I then sat on the bank of the Ganges and began to meditate upon Mahatma Gandhiji. It gave me some solace. After a few days I was meditating on Sri

Ramachandra for one and a half hours. This meditation with form automatically turned into a formless type. I felt perfect peace for ten minutes. My mind was fully engrossed in meditation on OM. This continued for half an hour. One day I had a different kind of experience. I opened my eyes after meditation. I found everything as Brahman without the help of reasoning. I had this mood the whole day. A brahmachari spoke to me for one hour on that day. I was hearing but my mind did not attend to his speech. It remained in the same mood. I could not recollect even a word of his speech.

On another occasion I meditated for half an hour. I had a very ecstatic mood. But owing to some distraction from sounds outside, this ecstatic mood dropped down. Again I began to meditate. I saw a beautiful light at the bottom of my heart. As soon as that light disappeared, I began to weep unconsciously. Somebody came and called me by my name. I stopped weeping a little but looking at his face wept again and again for twenty-five minutes......'V'.

I did pranayama for a month and then began to hear some sweet melodious sounds of different sorts, viz., flute, violin, bell-sound, double drum, sounds from a cluster of bells, a conch sound, a drum sound, and the sound of thunder; sometimes from right ear only, while at other times from both the ears......'N'.

During concentration I smell extraordinary sweet fragrances and good smells......'R'.

I used to see during meditation in the space between the eye-brows a blazing sun, a dazzling light and brilliant stars. The vision was not steady at all......'G'.

Sometimes I see some sages in the space between the eye-brows during the course of concentration. I used to see Lord Krishna, with the flute in his hands......'S'.

I used to see, at times, coloured lights, red, green, blue and white in the space between the eye-brows during my meditation. Sometimes I see a blue expansive sky. I, myself, appeared as a dot in that blue sky……'V'.

During meditation I occasionally see several demi-gods and goddesses with lustrous resplendent bodies with beautiful ornaments……'R'.

Sometimes during meditation I see a big void only……'T'.

During concentration I see my own face in the centre of a big light. Sometimes, I used to see the faces of my friends. I could clearly recognise them……'R'.

I feel a current of electricity passing from the muladhara to the back of the neck when I sit for meditation. Even at ordinary times, I feel this……'K'.

During meditation some astral entities with ghastly hideous faces and long teeth, black in colour, threaten me. But they did not do any harm……'A'.

When I sit for meditation I often get jerks of the legs and hands. Sometimes, my body jumps from one place to another……'M'.

I sometimes see palatial buildings, rivers, mountains and gardens during my meditation……'S'.

I meditate with open eyes. One night I saw in front of me, a brilliant light. In the centre of the light I saw Lord Krishna with flute in hand. My hair stood on end. I became speechless. I was struck with awe and wonder……'S'.

One day I had deep meditation. I separated myself actually from the physical body. I actually saw it as a slough thrown off. I was floating in the air. I had a peculiar sensation —

a mixture of extreme joy and extreme fear. I stayed in the air for a couple of minutes only. Owing to great fear I suddenly entered back, gliding with a peculiar sensation into the physical body. The experience was thrilling......'S'.

In the Hours of Meditation

Brahman, Self, Purusha, Chaitanya, Consciousness, God, Atman, Immortality, Freedom, Perfection, Peace, Bliss and Bhuma (or the Unconditioned) are synonymous terms. If you attain Self-realisation you will be freed from the round of births and deaths and its concomitant evils. The goal of life is the attainment of final beatitude or liberation (moksha). Liberation can be attained by constant meditation with a heart that is rendered pure and steady by selfless service, japa, etc.

Reality or Brahman can be realised by man. Many have attained Self-realisation. Many have enjoyed the state of nirvikalpa samadhi. Sankara, Dattatreya, Mansoor, Shams Tabriez, Jesus and Buddha were all realised souls who had direct perception of the Truth or cosmic vision. One who has known it cannot communicate it to others for want of means. Even the knowledge acquired by the five senses which are common to all, cannot be communicated to others. You cannot tell the taste of sugar candy to a man who has never tasted it; you cannot communicate the idea of colour to one born blind. All that the teacher can do is to tell his disciple the method of knowing the Truth, or the path that leads to the unfoldment of intuitional faculties.

In contemplation you are in spiritual contact with the unchanging light. You are cleansed of all the impurities. This light cleanses the soul which touches it. The light brings enhanced energy and great comfort. The sun-glass is exposed to the light of the sun and the straws underneath catch fire. So also within yourself, if you have an open heart devotedly lifted up to God, the light of His purity and love, illumining this open soul, will consume all your short-comings in its fire.

SIDDHIS

By samyama on the three modifications of the mind comes the knowledge of the past and future. (III-16)

By samyama on the signs (of others) comes the knowledge of their minds. (III-19)

By giving up even these (siddhis) comes the destruction of the seed of bondage, which brings kaivalya (or Self-realisation). (III-51)

Siddhis are psychic powers. A yogi claims that he can attain these extraordinary powers and knowledge by subduing the passions and appetites and by practising yama, niyama and samyama (the practice of concentration, meditation and samadhi at one time).

Yogis of olden times — like Sri Jnana Dev, Bhartrihari and Patanjali Maharshi — used to send and receive messages to and from distant persons through mind-telepathy and thought-transference. Telepathy was the first wireless telegraph and telephone service in the world. Even now there are yogis who are versed in telepathy. Thought travels with tremendous velocity through space. Thought is as much solid matter as a piece of stone. It can hit a man against whom it is directed.

There is no such thing as a miracle. Ordinary man is quite ignorant of higher spiritual things, he is sunk in oblivion and shut up from higher transcendental knowledge, so he calls some extraordinary occurrence or event a miracle. For a yogi who understands things in the light of yoga, a miracle is nothing. Just as a man of a village is astonished when he sees an aeroplane or cinema for the first time, so also a man of the world is stunned when he witnesses an extraordinary spectacle for the first time.

Yoga aims at controlling the mind. Miraculous siddhis or powers can be attained by the methodical exercise of yoga practice. The science of yoga promises as the fruit of such practice the attainment of the faculty of making oneself invisible, infinitely large or infinitely light, of assuming other bodies, of changing the course of nature and the acquisition of all other miraculous powers.

A yogi becomes the master of all forces in nature and can utilise them at his will. He has perfect control over the elements. The word 'bhagavan' denotes one who possesses the six superhuman powers or six attributes, viz., who can assume the size of an atom, who is the inexhaustible store-house of righteousness (dharma), glory (yasa), prosperity (sri), dispassion (vairagya) and knowledge (jnana).

Understand and realise the powers of the mind. Unfold the hidden powers or occult faculties. Close the eyes. Concentrate. Explore the higher regions of the mind. You can see distant objects, hear distant voices, send messages to distant parts, heal persons who are at a distance and move about to a distant place in the twinkling of an eye. Believe in the powers of the mind. If you have interest, attention, will-power and faith you are bound to succeed.

The source of the mind is the Atman or the highest Self. This mind is born of the Atman through His maya or illusory power. Man's mind is just a fragment of the cosmic or universal mind. A raja yogi becomes one with the cosmic mind and knows the workings of all minds. The yogi gets omniscience through the cosmic mind and experiences cosmic consciousness.

There are scientific means to tap this universal mind. Purity, concentration, dispassion, right living, right thinking, right conduct, right action, devotion, moderation in eating and sleeping, purity in food, truthfulness, continence, non-injury and austerities have to be regularly practised for a protracted time. When you tap the universal mind you will get higher, super-sensual knowledge. You will experience cosmic consciousness. You will get knowledge of the past, present and future. You will acquire knowledge of the root elements and the mental plane. You can know what is going on in the minds of others. You will get divine powers.

Through his yoga inner eye the yogi directly beholds the innate tendencies of his disciples; he knows their weaknesses and defects and prescribes the right kind of sadhana for their quick eradication. A jnani can also do this. Whatever a yogi does through simultaneous dharana, dhyana and samadhi, can be done by a jnani through his power of pure will or desire.

In higher stages of spiritual life speech has very little to do with communication. By mere willing and thinking, telepathic waves can be transmitted to the mind.

Stories of Siddhas

A disciple of Samartha Ramdas transmitted his spiritual power to the daughter of a dancing woman who was very passionate towards him. The disciple gazed at her. Her passion vanished, she became pious and religious-minded. Transmission of power can be done by a yogi through gazing, touch and willing.

A yogi named Chang Dev came riding on a tiger, with a serpent for a whip, to Alandi near Poona where Yogi Jnanesvar was living. He wanted to impress Jnanesvar with his own powers and command over nature. Jnanesvar was ready to receive him. With his brothers and sister he climbed upon the wall which surrounded his house and commanded it to bear him out to meet his visitor, and the wall did as it was bidden.

Mansoor was a great and famous sufi saint. He lived in Multan (Punjab) some four hundred years ago. He was always repeating "Analhaq". This corresponds to 'Soham' or 'I am He' of the vedantins. People reported to the then emperor that Mansoor was an atheist and that he was always repeating "Analhaq". The emperor was quite enraged. He ordered that Mansoor be cut into pieces. Accordingly, he was cut into pieces. Even then the flesh was uttering "Analhaq, Analhaq". He felt no pain as he was a full-blown jnani and he had full identification with Brahman. He was above body-consciousness. He was bodiless in reality. When they put the pieces of flesh and bones in the fire the ashes uttered "Analhaq".

Shams Tabriez was another saint of Multan. He also lived some four hundred years ago. He was a Hindu sannyasin with the sannyasi name of Puri. Mohammedans gave him the name Shams Tabriez just to appropriate him to their side. He was also disliked by the then emperor because he was always repeating "Analhaq". One day, when he was very hungry, someone gave him a piece of raw flesh. He asked for some fire from some people to roast it. They all refused, because if they were to help him they would be punished by the emperor.

Shams Tabriez then kept the piece of flesh in his hand and showed it to the sun and said, "O sun, come down immediately and roast the piece of flesh for me. I am very hungry." At once the sun came down and roasted the piece of flesh. Shams Tabriez ate it with joy. The scorching rays of the sun began to burn the people of Multan and the emperor, trembling with fear, prostrated before Shams Tabriez and said: "Forgive me my Lord. Make the sun go back to its original place." The sun obeyed the orders of the jnani and went back to its original place. A jnani is God Himself. He can do anything through pure will or resolve. He is King of kings, though he has no treasury. What is a petty emperor before a sannyasin, the Emperor of emperors!

Shams Tabriez was later skinned alive by the order of the emperor, yet he only laughed throughout. Kabir's corpse turned into flowers, half of which were buried by the Hindus at Benares, the other half at Maghar. Sage Tiruvalluvar's body was converted into gold at the time of his death. The bodies of some saints in Southern India were converted into a mass of light at the time of their death. Saints can do anything they like.

It is true that Buddha died of purging, Sankaracharya died of piles, Ramakrishna died of cancer and Vivekananda died of diabetes. Even if there is a physical ailment the sage is not affected by it as he has no identification with the body. In his vision there is no body for him, so he never cares to attend to it.

Requirements for Attaining Siddhis

Many persons take to yoga practices with curiosity and the expectation of acquiring powers and awakening the kundalini. They leave off the practice after three months. This is not good. Application and tenacity, patience and perseverance are necessary for sanguine success and siddhis. Mere emotion will not do.

The success in yoga is quicker according to the amount of energy put in by the sadhak! You cannot expect to have siddhis by simply shutting and opening the nostrils for three or six months. He who is established in yama and niyama and who has mastery over a posture, can take to pranayama. He will undoubtedly have success.

Real Nature of Spiritual Experiences

Higher spiritual experiences have nothing to do with colours or sounds. There should be inner joy, peace and poise. There should be balance of mind in success and failure, pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour. The pairs of opposites should be overcome. Likes and dislikes should vanish. There should be Cosmic Love. The whole world should become the manifestation of the supreme Lord. There should be freedom from all kinds of fears and pains. This is the real nature of high spiritual experiences.

Psychic powers — siddhis and riddhis — have no proper place in spiritual life. You will have to shun them ruthlessly even if they manifest during the course of your spiritual practices. They roll under the feet of that yoga student who has controlled the senses and who practices concentration. They are hindrances to realisation. You will have to spurn them as worthless because your aim is the attainment of liberation (kaivalya moksha).

Patanjali Maharishi (author of the *Yoga Sutras*), clearly warns the students that they should not be carried away by temptations of powers. The gods themselves tempt the incautious yogi by offering him a position similar to theirs.

Uddalaka was tempted by the gods, but he refused their invitations. So remember, don't stop even with these psychic powers.

Exhibition of psychic powers is no criterion for measuring one's height of spirituality. Sometimes a yogi may exhibit a miracle to his student just to convince him of the existence of super-sensual things and to encourage him in the spiritual path. He who exhibits siddhis for selfish ends is a big worldly man. He will soon have his downfall. A yogi came to Calcutta and exhibited in the University Hall the feats of drinking pure nitric acid, swallowing nails and chewing glass-pieces. People were struck with wonder. He licked the nitric acid like honey. But he was a purely commercial man. He made a demonstration of these acts to anyone who could pay Rs. 30/-. Can there be an iota or grain of spirituality or real yoga where business transactions are made? I leave this for the readers to judge. The poor yogi died in Rangoon on account of some carelessness in his technique. There is nothing really extraordinary in these feats. There are some herbs to destroy the evil effects of acids and glass-pieces.

It is only the uncultured man who runs after powers. The possession of siddhis never brings one nearer to God. They have no spiritual value. Worldly people are enamoured of persons who exhibit these powers and run after them with curiosity. They are under the wrong impression that those who exhibit powers are real mahatmas or jivanmuktas. This is wrong. Patanjali Maharshi also says:

> *The siddhis are regarded as perfections by the undisciplined mind only, but are serious obstacles to spiritual meditation.* (III-38)

Naturally, various kinds of siddhis are acquired by the yogi who has controlled his senses and his prana and who practises concentration and deep meditation. Emancipation can only be achieved when you shun even omniscience and omnipotence as worthless. They are nothing when compared with the supreme imperishable wealth of liberation (moksha or kaivalya).

He who runs after siddhis will become the biggest householder and worldly-minded man. Self-realisation only is the goal.

If you use these powers for base and selfish purposes, for some material gain or other, you will face a downfall and be punished by nature. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Every wrong action is bound to cause reaction. It will rebound upon you and bring your own destruction. Do not prostitute the psychic powers. I seriously warn you, beware. Power, sex, money and erudition act as powerful intoxicants. The possessor does not know exactly what he is doing. His intellect becomes turbid and his understanding gets clouded. You will not be tempted by these powers if you are established in the practice of yama or self-restraint. Whatever psychic powers you may get, treat them as poison, dung or straw. Don't deviate from your spiritual path and object of meditation.

Just as you treat a cow, so also demi-gods treat men and aspirants. They put serious obstacles in the path of the aspirants. They tempt them, particularly the advanced students. Respect them, but reject the offered powers or allurements ruthlessly. Then only can you march further on the path. If you yield to their temptations, if you become a slave of siddhis, you will have a hopeless downfall. O aspirants, beware.

One becomes fit for immortality only when he abandons the pleasures of this world and other worlds, including those of Indra and Brahman. Psychic powers tempt the yogi to run into the sensual grooves. The motives attributed to their achievement may be pure in the beginning, but the suppressed desires will all of a sudden sprout up and delude the aspirant. Incessant prayer and strong belief in God are the remedies for all ills. Gradually you should develop dispassion for worldly objects, including the body. Be cautious at all times.

SAMADHI

The same dhyana is samadhi when it shines with the object alone, as it were, devoid of itself. (III-3)

When the mind is completely absorbed in meditation it is termed samadhi. The mind loses its own consciousness and becomes identified with the object of meditation. The meditator and the meditated, the thinker and the thought, the subject and the object, become one.

In concentration the mind is simply fixed on the object. In meditation the mind is filled with one idea of the object alone. All other thoughts are shut out. In samadhi the mind is stilled, the subconscious is silenced, the thoughts are controlled and all surging, bubbling emotions are subdued. The yogi passes into the transcendental calm or the stupendous ocean of silence and attains the transcendental knowledge of Brahman the eternal. Samadhi installs you in the Atman. Through samadhi the finite Self is absorbed in the infinite or absolute consciousness.

Samadhi is beyond the reach of mind and speech. There is no language or means to give expression to it. Even in worldly experience you cannot express the taste of an apple to one who has not tasted it, or the nature of a colour to a blind man.

Samadhi or blissful divine experience arises when the ego and the mind are dissolved. It is a state to be attained by one's own effort. It is limitless, divisionless and infinite, an experience of being and of pure consciousness. When this experience is realised the mind, desires, actions and feelings of joy and sorrow vanish into a void.

In samadhi there is no mental tension. There is perfect stillness or perfect poise. There is total mental inhibition. The senses, the mind and the intellect cease functioning. Form-perception and reflex-perception totally vanish. The meditator loses his individuality and becomes identical with the Supreme Self. He becomes an embodiment of bliss, peace and knowledge. Just as the river joins the ocean, the individual soul mixes with the Supreme Soul. All limitations and differences disappear. The yogi attains the highest knowledge and eternal bliss. This is the aim of existence, the final beatitude of life. The yogi is an established sage or an illumined jivanmukta now. He is liberated while living, he is absolutely free from pain, sorrow, fear, doubt and delusion. He has become identical with Brahman. The bubble has become the ocean. The river has joined the ocean, and has become the ocean. All differences and distinctions will totally vanish. He will experience: "I am the immortal Self. All indeed is Brahman. There is nothing but Brahman."

When the mind is concentrated on Brahman (Supreme Self) it becomes one with Brahman, like camphor with the flame, salt with water or water with milk. Mind melts in Brahman and becomes of the nature of Brahman. The meditator becomes Brahman. Then there is no duality. This is the state of kaivalya, a state beyond description. It induces awe, supreme joy and unalloyed felicity. You will have to realise it yourself.

True samadhi gives super-sensual knowledge. All doubts, delusions and the three knots of nescience (avidya), desire (kama) and action (karma) are destroyed by the fire of wisdom. It gives absolute fearlessness and an unruffled state of mind. This state is described in detail in the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The ultimate Truth or Brahman or the Absolute can be experienced by all persons by regular practice of meditation with a pure heart. Mere abstract reasoning and study of books will not do. What is wanted is direct experience.

Direct experience is the source for higher intuitional knowledge or divine wisdom. This experience is super-conscious or transcendental. There is neither the play of the senses nor the intellect here. It is not an emotional experience. There is revelation, insight or intuition. The senses, mind and intellect are at perfect rest and they do not function at all. This experience is neither an imaginary experience of a visionary dreamer, a reverie nor an hypnotic trance. It is a solid living truth like a fruit on the palm of your hand. The third eye or the eye of wisdom is opened in the experiencer. The extraordinary experience comes from cognition through the spiritual eye or the eye of intuition. The eye of wisdom can be opened when the senses, mind and intellect cease functioning, when the Brahmakara vritti (where the mind thinks of Brahman to the exclusion of all other thoughts) is raised by completely eradicating all desires, wrath, greed, pride, egoism and hatred.

There is neither darkness nor void in this experience. It is all light. There is neither sound nor touch nor form here. It is a magnanimous experience of unity, or oneness. There is neither time nor causation here. You become omniscient and omnipotent, you become the 'all-knower'. You know everything in detail. You know the whole mystery of creation and get immortality, higher knowledge and eternal bliss.

All dualities vanish here. There is neither subject nor object, neither form nor formlessness, neither duality nor non-duality. There is neither tossing of the mind nor one-pointedness. There is neither gain nor loss, neither pleasure nor pain, neither east nor west, neither day nor night.

This state is beyond all relativity. It is not a state of inertia or nothingness, but a state of 'everythingness'. You enter into a state of absolute awareness, in which time and place disappear; every place is 'here', every period of time is 'now' and everything is 'I'. In this state you obtain bliss and eternal life, you transcend the limitations of empirical existence and attain a rich inner life. It is not merely an emotional enthusiasm or an exhilarating feeling. It is direct, unique intuitive experience of Truth or Absolute consciousness. It is blissful union, a state of pure consciousness beyond all expression, feeling, throbbing and thrill. There is perfect awareness in samadhi. The aspirant rests in his centre — the goal of his search — and realises absolute freedom, independence and perfection.

Samadhi is the means of liberation or freedom from births and deaths. It leads to the direct intuitive perception of the Truth or the Infinite. It puts an end to all troubles of life and the causes of rebirth. It annihilates the impressions or samskaras which give rise to fresh births, and it helps one to tide over even the karma that determines one's present life, even though all the fruition of his past karma has not ended. In samadhi there is no perception of duality, which is the cause for fear. Avidya (ignorance) is absent.

The sage born of samadhi-experience gets established in his own Self. He is endowed with cosmic vision and transcendental divine knowledge.

It is only through samadhi that you can know the Unknown, see the Unseen and get access into the Inaccessible. The sum total of all knowledge of the three worlds and of all secular sciences is nothing but mere husk when compared to the infinite knowledge of a sage who has attained the highest state of samadhi. Samadhi bestows supreme knowledge, you are freed from the wheel of birth and death and get liberation.

If the desires and attachment to the objects of the world vanish entirely, and if you are in that immovable state, you have become a jivanmukta. You will abide in your own Self. You will rest in the non-dual supreme seat. The jnana-vision will arise in you. The light of wisdom will shine unobscured like the sun in the absence of clouds. You will be absolutely free from delusion and sorrow. You will actually feel that the Self alone pervades and permeates everywhere in this world. You will shine with the effulgence of Brahman. You will possess equal-vision and a balanced mind. You will be free from longing for sensual objects; because the mind will always be made cool with the bliss of Brahman. You will be bathed in the cool ambrosial nectar that flows from a contented and quiescent mind.

Samadhi comes only after constant and protracted practice of meditation. It is not a commodity that can be obtained easily. Those who can really enter into samadhi are very very rare.

How to Attain Samadhi

Faith or confidence in the efficacy of yoga, power for concentration of the mind, memory for contemplation, samadhi and discernment or the direct perception brought about by meditation, become the means for the attainment of the supreme.

To begin with, meditation should be done on a gross form. When you advance in meditation you can take to abstract meditation, or meditation on subtle things or ideas. The mind should be gradually disciplined and trained in meditation. It cannot all at once enter into the highest asamprajnata samadhi or that which constitutes the highest subtle essence. That is the reason why Patanjali Maharishi has described the practice of various kinds of lower samadhis. When the mind is extremely attached to gross objects it is not possible to fix it on subtle objects all at once. There must be a gradual ascent in the ladder of yoga. You should place your foot cautiously on each rung of the ladder. You should pass through successive stages before you attain the highest asamprajanata or nirvikalpa samadhi. But those who have passed through the lower stages in their previous births can attain to the highest stage at the very outset through the grace of the Lord. If the yoga student has reached a higher stage he need not revert to the lower stages.

Samadhi becomes natural through long practice of intense meditation, and not through pranayama or any hatha yoga practice.

In neophytes, pratyahara (abstraction) first takes place. Then dharana (concentration) begins. Then dhyana (meditation) slowly commences. Before samadhi manifests, their minds, getting impatient and tired, drop down. In trained yogis you cannot say where pratyahara ends and dharana begins, where dharana ends and dhyana begins, where dhyana ends and samadhi begins. The moment they sit on the meditation seat all the processes occur simultaneously with electric or lightning speed, and they enter into samadhi at their conscious will.

There are four classes of yogis:

1. Prathama-kalpika, one who is just a beginner or neophyte. The light is just appearing. He has not attained any siddhis. He is just practising savitarka samadhi.
2. Madhu bhumika, one who has entered nirvitarka samadhi and who has attained intuition. The stage is also called madhumati, because it brings such knowledge as gives satisfaction, just as honey does. (Madhu means honey.)
3. Prajna jyoti, the yogi who has attained mastery over the elements and the senses. This yogi cannot be moved or tempted by the invitations of celestial beings even. He has attained the stage of madhu-pratika.
4. Atikrantabhananiya, the yogi who has attained the

stages of sorrowlessness and thoughtlessness. He has attained kaivalya or full independence.

The raja yogi can get all siddhis without samyama by spontaneous illumination through purity. Prasankhyanam is the highest illumination, through full discrimination between purusha (spirit) and prakriti (nature).

The disciple should not sit idle and expect a miracle from the guru to push him directly into samadhi. Just as a man anxiously seeks the means of escape from the midst of a burning house, so also the aspirant should have a burning desire to free himself from the fire of worldly existence (samsara). Then only will he be able to enter into deep meditation and samadhi.

To still the waves of the mind and hold it steady in samadhi needs constant and protracted practice of meditation. There may be breaks in the meditation in the beginning, but practice can make you perfect. Later on you can remain absorbed in meditation. You can merge yourself in samadhi with a mind steady like a flame protected from the wind. Before getting sanguine success in meditation, get victory over the asana pose first. Sit upon your seat with the steadiness of a rock for two or three hours. If the body is steady the mind also will be steady.

Do not mistake a little concentration or one-pointedness of mind for samadhi. Simply because you have risen a little above body-consciousness on account of a little concentration, do not think that you have attained samadhi.

Advanced aspirants should stop all sorts of work and study of religious books even, if they want to enter into samadhi quickly. They should observe mauna and remain in a solitary place on the banks of Ganges, Jumuna, Narmada or any river. They should live on milk alone or milk and fruits. They should plunge themselves in sadhana in right earnest, reducing sleep to two or three hours. They should start the practice in the beginning of winter.

To attain samadhi one should observe strict celibacy and dietetic restrictions and must have purity of heart. If these are not attained there is no possibility of attaining that state. These preliminary qualifications should be grasped well, then only must one try to enter the portals of samadhi. So, no-one can enter into samadhi until he is himself a greatly purified soul. The mind should be perfectly purified, then only the mechanism or vessel will be fit enough to receive the descent of divine light. It should be sufficiently strong to bear the pressure or sudden expansion of consciousness or cosmic vision which is above mind and which covers the whole existence in one sweep of this new exalted, magnanimous experience.

Samadhi is a positive, real state. It is all knowledge. During meditation, when the mind passes into a calm state of samata, when you feel a peculiar concentration and bliss (ananda), think you are entering into samadhi state. Do not disturb this state; try your best to keep it for a long time. Mark this state very carefully. Just as a very skilful archer in shooting at the bird is aware of the way in which he takes his steps, holds the bow, the bow string and the arrow at the time when he pierces the bird — 'thus standing in this position, holding thus the bow, thus the bow string and thus the arrow, I pierced the bird' — and ever afterwards would not fail to fulfil these conditions that he might pierce the bird, even so the aspirant should note the suitable conditions, thus: 'eating this kind of food, following such a person, in such a dwelling, in this mode, at this time, I attained to this meditation and samadhi'.

As a clever cook in serving his master notes the kind of food that his master relishes and henceforward serves it and gets gain, so the aspirant, too, notes the conditions such as the nourishment, etc. at the moment of attaining meditation and samadhi, and in fulfilling them gets ecstasy again and again.

The Mind in Samadhi

The mind becomes Brahman when it is purified and brought into samadhi state. The state in which the mind remains free from sensations is liberation. Therefore the state of the mind remaining unconnected with the senses or with the mind's own functions or actions — hopes, fears, etc. — is liberation. Mind, without mingling with Brahman, cannot be disconnected from sensations. Just as salt mingled with water becomes water, so mind mingled with Brahman ultimately becomes Brahman itself. When the mind becomes Brahman this world (which is the creation of the mind) also melts away in Brahman and becomes Brahman itself. Therefore 'All this is Brahman' will be direct experience only to he who has practised this.

In samadhi the purified mind withdraws from its natural or habitual occupation and gets itself fixed upon the Atman, which is not touched by the mind. It withdraws itself from the external objects, looks within and concentrates on the Innermost Self. It resolves itself in the Atman, its source, and becomes the Atman itself. It takes the form of the Atman, just as camphor becomes the fire itself. Knowledge of Brahman or Atman is real experience and not mere knowing. "*To know Brahman is to become Brahman*" is the emphatic declaration of the *Upanishads*.

Deep Sleep and Samadhi

Samadhi is deep sleep with the full knowledge of the Self. You get this sleepless sleep when you have burnt the five sense organs in the fire of wisdom, when you have extricated yourself from the clutches of ignorance and controlled all desires.

Study the condition of deep sleep. There is neither the play of the mind nor the play of the senses. There are no objects, there is neither attraction nor repulsion. Wherefrom do you derive the bliss in sleep? The experience in sleep is universal — there is no difference of opinion here. Everyone says: "I slept soundly. I knew nothing. I was very happy in sleep." During deep sleep you rest in the Atman and enjoy the bliss of Atman which is independent of objects. The difference between deep sleep and samadhi is that in deep sleep there is the veil of ignorance, whereas in samadhi this veil is removed and destroyed by the fire of knowledge.

Some aspirants mistake 'deep sleep' and the state of tandra or 'half sleep' for nirvikalpa samadhi. This is a terrible mistake. If you experience samadhi of any kind you will have super-sensual knowledge. If you do not possess any intuitional knowledge, be sure that you are far from samadhi. You can experience samadhi only when you are established in yama, niyama or good conduct and when you have a very pure heart. How can the Lord be enthroned in an impure heart?

If you can consciously induce a state like deep sleep, it is no longer deep sleep, but samadhi; it is sleepless sleep wherein the senses and the mind entirely cease their function. The aspirant enjoys the perfect joy of freedom, of vast, infinite, supracosmic experiences and the supreme silence of the Imperishable. This sleepless sleep is the superconscious state (maha nidra). It is perfect awareness wherein the individual soul has merged itself into the Supreme Soul. There is no waking from this sleep.

Cosmic Consciousness

There are several different degrees of samadhi, from the gross or savitarka samadhi to the highest or nirvikalpa samadhi. In the lower form of samadhi the yogi attains cosmic consciousness, which progresses to absolute consciousness in nirvikalpa samadhi. In the state of absolute consciousness the seer, the sight, the things seen; or the knower, knowable and knowledge; or the subject and the object, become one. In cosmic consciousness there is yet the seer and the seen.

In cosmic consciousness the lower mind is withdrawn from the external objective world, the senses are abstracted in the mind and the individual mind becomes one with the cosmic mind or Hiranyagarbha, the Over-soul or the Soul of the universe. The function of the intellect, the objective mind and the senses are suspended. The yogi becomes a living soul and sees into the life of things through his new divine eye of intuition or wisdom.

The state of cosmic consciousness is grand and sublime. It is beyond description. The mind and speech return back from it baffled as if they are not able to grasp and describe it. Language and words are imperfect. It induces awe, supreme joy and highest unalloyed felicity free from pain, sorrow and fear. This is divine experience.

Sri Sankara, Dattatreya, Vama Deva, Jadabharata, Mansoor, Shams Tabriez, Madalasa, Yajnavalkya, Rama Das, Tulsi Das, Kabir, Hafiz, Tukaram, Mira, Gouranga, Madhavacharya, Ramanujacharya, Lord Jesus, Lord Buddha, Lord Mohammed and Lord Zoroaster all had experience of cosmic consciousness. Arjuna, Sanjaya and Devaki also had the experience of cosmic consciousness. Devaki saw the whole universe within the mouth of the baby Krishna.

The yogi who has experience of cosmic consciousness acquires all divine powers. He attains many kinds of psychic powers which are described in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* and the *Raja Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali Maharishi.

This new experience bestows enlightenment, which places the experiencer on a new plane of existence. There is an indescribable feeling of elation and indescribable joy and bliss. The yogi experiences a sense of universality, a consciousness of eternal life. It is not a mere conviction. He actually feels it. The individuality has gone. The little 'I' has melted. The differentiating mind that splits up, has vanished. All barriers, all sense of duality, differences and separateness have disappeared. The idea of caste, creed and colour have gone. There is no idea of time and space, there is only eternity. He has the feeling of one who has obtained all that he desires. He feels, 'There is nothing more to be known by me.' He feels perfect awareness of a super-conscious plane of knowledge and intuition. He knows the whole secret of creation, he is a knower of all the details of creation. He is omiscient.

Absolute fearlessness, desirelessness, thoughtlessness, I-lessness, mine-lessness, anger-lessness, an aura in the face and freedom from grief are some of the signs that indicate that a man has reached the state of super-consciousness. He is also always in a state of perfect bliss. You can never see anger, depression, cheerlessness or sorrow in his face. You will find elevation, joy and peace in his presence.

Cosmic consciousness is perfect awareness of the oneness of life. The yogi feels that the universe is filled with one life. He actually feels that there is no such thing as blind force or dead matter, and that all is alive, vibrating and intelligent. This is the experience of the scientist Bose also. He has demonstrated it through laboratory experiments.

He who has cosmic consciousness feels that the universe is all 'mine'. He is one with the supreme Lord, he is one with the universal knowledge and life. He experiences bliss and joy beyond understanding and description. In the moment of illumination or great spiritual exaltation he has the actual divine universal vision. He is conscious of being in the presence of God. He sees the light of God's countenance. He is lifted above the ordinary plane of consciousness and reaches a higher state of consciousness. He has a cosmic or universal understanding.

He does not worry about death or future, about what may come after the cessation of the life of the present body. He is one with eternity, infinity and immortality.

During illumination the flood-gate of joy breaks. The yogi is inundated with waves of indescribable ecstasy. Bliss, immortality, eternity, truth and divine love become the core of his being, the essence of his life, the only possible reality. He realises that the deep ever-lasting fountain of joy exists in every heart, that the immortal life underlies all beings, that this eternal, all-embracing, all-inclusive love envelops, supports and guides every particle, every atom of creation. Sin, sorrow and death are now but words for him, words without meaning. He feels that the elixir of life, the nectar of immortality, is flowing in his veins.

He feels no need for food or sleep. He is absolutely desireless. There is a great change in his appearance and manner. His face shines with a radiant light. His eyes are lustrous pools of joy and bliss. He feels that the entire world is bathed in a sea of satisfying love or immortal bliss which is the very essence of life.

The whole world is home to him. He could never feel strange or alien in any place. The mountains, the distant lands which he has never seen would be as much his own as the home of his boyhood. He feels that the whole world is his body. He feels that all hands, all feet, are his.

Fatigue is unknown to him. His world is like child's play, happy and care-free. He beholds God only, everywhere. Chairs, tables and trees have a cosmic significance for him. His breath will stop completely sometimes, and time and space vanish for him. He experiences absolute peace and bliss beyond understanding and description. He actually feels that all is himself only; that snakes, scorpions and tigers are as much part of himself as his own eyes, nose, hands and feet.

He is one with the ether, flower, sun, ocean and sky. He feels the elixir of life, the nectar of immortality flowing in his veins. He feels that the entire universe is bathed in a sea of satisfying love. He has knowledge of Brahman and sees the real universe, which is the essence or background of the universe of matter, energy and mind. He is in a state of bliss and ecstasy beyond understanding and description.

Turiya — The Fourth State

The transcendental experience is also called by the name turiya or the fourth state. The first three states are 'waking', 'dreaming' and 'dreamless sleep', and the fourth is 'turiya'. The first three states are common to all. The fourth is latent in every human being.

When you are established in the fourth state, when you experience the transcendental state of Brahmic consciousness, the truth — which had been before but an intellectual abstraction — becomes a living reality definitely experienced by you.

Various names such as samyag darshan, sahaja avastha, nirvana, turiya-atita, aparoksha-anubhava, Brahma-sakshatkara, nirvikalpa samadhi and asamprajnata samadhi are given to this transcendental state, but all of them unmistakably point to the same goal. Real spiritual life begins after one enters into this state of super-consciousness.

You will realise at all times, and under all circumstances, that you are identical with the invisible existence, knowledge and bliss; that you pervade all persons and objects; and that you are beyond all limitations. If you have the knowledge of the Self or Brahman at all times without any break, then you are established in the Self. This is a state to be experienced within, but cannot be expressed in words. This is the final state of peace, the goal of life. This experience will give you freedom from all forms of bondage.

Jada Samadhi and Chaitanya Samadhi

Samadhi is of two kinds, jada (inert) samadhi and chaitanya (conscious) samadhi. There is a popular belief that samadhi means sitting in a state of absolute unconsciousness in the lotus pose, with perfect suspension of breath. The ordinary run of mankind thinks that the man who is established in samadhi should not have consciousness of his surroundings, and should be absolutely insensible even if a knife is thrust into his body. Such samadhis do certainly exist. They are all jada samadhis induced by hatha yoga exercises such as khechari mudra and retention of breath, etc. The prana is taken up and fixed in some chakra. The man is practically dead for the time being. The breathing and heart will entirely stop. This is something like a long, deep sleep. These samadhis are of no value. The past impressions and desires are not completely burnt. There is no perfect awareness. The man returns from this samadhi as the same man, with the same bundle of old samskaras and vasanas. He has no super-intuitional knowledge. This is a kind of acrobatic feat or internal gymnastics. Worldly people are deceived by such feats. Such samadhis cannot give liberation.

When the mind gets concentrated the breath will become less and less. It will come to 15, then 14, 13, 12, 10, 8 per minute, and so on, and the pulse beats may come to 30. When you enter into very deep silent meditation the breath will not come out of the nostrils. There may be occasional slow movement of the lungs and the abdomen. From the nature of the breathing you can infer the degree of concentration of an aspirant. Watch the breath very carefully. But, even if you do not feel any pulse in the sadhak when he is in meditation, even if his breathing stops, do not think that he is in nirvikalpa samadhi. He should return with super-sensual divine knowledge. Then only can it be said that he has attained real samadhi. The breathing and pulse may stop from various other causes also. If one abstains from food and drink and practises a little concentration or even sits on one asana steadily for some time, the breathing and pulse may stop. The sadhak must have perfect awareness in meditation. There is not much spiritual gain if he remains in a mere dull, inert state, even though he is insensible to external sounds. Once two sannyasins were deceived by another sadhu who used to sit in meditation without pulse and breathing for several hours. Later on he turned out to be a hypocrite and a hoax. He cheated them and ran away with some money. You will have to be very very careful in your judgement.

During meditation do not allow yourself to pass into an inert state. Do not mistake this state for merging in the Lord or communion. Remaining in a dull state for some hours is not desirable. It is like deep sleep. This will not help you in your spiritual evolution. If this time is spent in doing japa, kirtan, mantra-writing and study of sacred books you will have quick evolution. Be on the alert. Watch vigilantly. If there is real merging or real deep meditation you must have peace, bliss and divine knowledge; you must be free from doubts, fear, delusion, egoism, anger, passion and likes and dislikes. Some dull inexperienced aspirants, mistaking deep sleep or this jada state for nirvikalpa samadhi, get false contentment and stop their sadhana.

Sometimes cupidity will simulate a concentrated state. You are concentrated elsewhere but not on the object of meditation. Watch this and withdraw the mind.

In chaitanya samadhi the yogi has perfect awareness. He comes down with divine knowledge. He gives inspired talks and messages and those who hear him are much elevated. The subtle desires are destroyed by this samadhi and the yogi attains perfect freedom.

Savitarka Samadhi and Nirvitarka Samadhi

> *There the concentration in which the options of word, meaning and understanding are confused, is called savitarka samadhi, or the samadhi with argumentation.* (I-42)

Savitarka samadhi is samadhi with reasoning. It is a superficial attempt of the mind to grasp any object. Sound, meaning and knowledge are mixed up in this samadhi.

The aspirant can meditate on Lord Vishnu with four hands, or Lord Krishna with flute in hand, or any ordinary object. He will obtain the direct perception of all the peculiar features, the excellences and the defects of the object of meditation. He will have complete knowledge of the object. He will be endowed with all the unheard of and unthought of features of the object. He will obtain all these through savitarka samadhi. He meditates on the object again and again by isolating it from other objects.

The yoga student can meditate on the gross elements also. He will gain power over them through intense meditation. The elements will reveal their truths to him.

Just as the new archer first aims at big objects only and then at smaller ones gradually, so also the beginner in yoga concentrates on the gross objects — such as the five gross elements, or Lord Hari with four hands, etc. — and then on subtle ones. In this manner the grasp of the objects by the mind becomes subtle. A yogi directly perceives, by the force of his meditation, the real body of Lord Vishnu as He lies in Vaikuntha, although he remains at a great distance from the Lord.

> *Nirvitarka samadhi is that in which the mind shines as the object alone on the disappearance of memory, and when the mind is, as it were, devoid of its own nature.* (I-43)

In savitarka samadhi, concentration is practised on gross objects and their nature in relation to time and space. This is a gross form of samadhi. When the yogi meditates on the elements as they are, by taking them out of time and space, then it is called nirvitarka samadhi, or samadhi without questioning, reasoning or argumentation. This is a subtle form of samadhi.

In savitarka samadhi there is a fanciful notion of word, object and idea. There is no such notion in nirvitarka samadhi. There are three factors in the comprehension of a word, e.g. cow: (1) cow, the word; (2) cow, the object; and (3) cow, the idea in the mind. When the meditator imagines these three to be one and the same, it is an instance of fanciful notion of the word, object and idea.

Savichara Samadhi and Nirvichara Samadhi

> *By this (process) the meditation with deliberation and without deliberation with their objects as subtle, are also explained.* (I-44)

> *The province of the subtle objects reaches up to (or ends with) mula prakriti (primordial matter).* (I-45)

If you meditate on the subtle tanmatra (rudimentary elements) and their nature in relation to time and space, it is savichara samadhi with deliberation or discrimination. This is subtler than savitarka and nirvitarka samadhis. The five gross elements are derived from the subtle elements, through the process of quintuplication or mixing. Meditation goes a step higher in this samadhi than in the previous one. The yogi will get knowledge of the subtle elements and will obtain control over them. He will get direct perception of the various subtle forms of the object, culminating in primordial matter.

There is a mysterious power in meditation. Although ordinary meditation is possible only in ways already heard and thought of, yet even such things as have not been heard or thought of may be directly cognised by the force of meditation.

> *When the meditation without deliberation is purified, comes the spiritual internal peace of mind.* (I-47)

If you meditate on the subtle elements by taking them out of time and space, by thinking of them as they are, it will constitute nirvichara samadhi (without deliberation or discrimination). As there is pure sattva only in the mind owing to the eradication of rajas and tamas, the yogi enjoys internal peace or contentment and subjective luminosity. The mind is very steady.

The Purusha, who is all bliss, all knowledge and all purity, can only be realised when the mind is perfectly steady and is filled with purity. The yogi gets simultaneous knowledge of everything.

This consciousness therein is full of Truth. (I-48)

There is real knowledge free from doubt and perverted knowledge. There is knowledge by mere intuition. The real essence is revealed here. There is not even a trace of false knowledge. Worldly knowledge (knowledge from books) is only false knowledge.

The range of intellect is different from those of revelation and inferential cognition. (I-49)

In this state, knowledge of hidden things and distant objects is directly obtained. This knowledge is perfectly true and is absolutely free from errors. Knowledge of minute particulars is obtained.

Reason has got its own limitations. It is an imperfect instrument. It cannot solve many problems of life. It cannot answer the 'Why?' of the universe. It shines in light borrowed from the Purusha. It takes you to the threshold of intuition and leaves you there. Intuition transcends reason but does not contradict it. The yogi gets super-sensual knowledge and knowledge that lies beyond reason through intuition.

The impressions therefrom (from the samadhi previously described) obstruct other impressions. (I-50)

The impressions produced on the mind by this samadhi prevent other impressions from gaining ground on it. The mind has become absolutely pure now. This samadhi has the power to suppress all the old worldly samskaras. Samskaras are your real enemies. They constitute the destiny of man. During concentration they all join together and attack you with great vehemence, but the samskara of this samadhi comes to your rescue. It destroys all the other vicious samskaras. It is a great asset for you. The mind is absolutely steady now. It can never run towards objects.

Sananda Samadhi or the Blissful Samadhi

Sananda samadhi gives intense joy. In this samadhi the gross and the subtle elements are given up. The yogi meditates on the sattvic mind itself. He thinks of the mind which is devoid of rajas and tamas. Through this type of samadhi there arises in the yogi a peculiar perception in the form of intense joy.

Do not give up your practices, do not stop here. You will have to advance still further. This is a glimpse of Truth only. This is not the whole experience, the highest realisation. This is a new platform for you. Stand firmly now on this platform. Try to ascend further and reach the unconditioned state. Then you will be proof against temptations.

Sasmita Samadhi

> *These only, viz., savitarka, savichara, sananda and sasmita are sabija samadhi (with seed [samskaras]).* (I-46)

In this samadhi the mind is the object of meditation. It bestows the knowledge of the subject of all experiences. The self knows the Self. Only the sattvic state of the ego remains. The yogi can think of himself now as without his gross body. He feels that he has a fine body. This samadhi takes the yogi to the root of experiences and shows the way to freedom.

The yogi feels, 'I am (asmi) other than the body'. He experiences that the gross, subtle and joyous samadhis are not the highest samadhis. He finds defects in them also, and gets disgusted with them (even though they are infinitely more blissful than the miserable mundane life), because even lower kinds of samadhi act as an obstacle on the path of the aspirant and prevent him from striving to reach the highest nirvikalpa samadhi. He proceeds further and practises sasmita samadhi. He experiences consciousness of the Self (sasmita). He experiences a feeling of 'enough' and develops dispassion in its highest form (para vairagya). This finally leads to the development of asamprajnata or nirvikalpa samadhi.

Raja Yoga Samadhi

> *Samprajnata samadhi or concrete meditation is that which is*

accompanied by argumentation, deliberation, happiness, egoism and form. (I-17)

According to raja yoga, samadhi is mainly of two kinds — samprajnata and asamprajnata. In the former the seeds of samskaras are not destroyed. In the latter the samskaras are completely fried or annihilated. That is the reason why the former is also called sabija samadhi (with seed) and the latter as nirbija samadhi (without seed or samskaras). Samprajnata samadhi leads to asamprajnata samadhi.

Samprajnata samadhi is also known by the names savikalpa samadhi or salambana samadhi. This samadhi brings perfect knowledge of the object of meditation. The mind continuously, and to the exlusion of all other objects, assumes the nature of and becomes one with the subject of its contemplation. The yogi attains all the powers of controlling nature in this samadhi.

All the forms of samprajnata samadhi are salambana (with support) and sabija (with seed of saṃskara).

There are three states of samprajnata samadhi. In the first, the content of the mental modification (vritti) is existence, knowledge, bliss absolute. There is still a separate knower. You get real wisdom. In the second, every kind of veiling is removed. The third state is the state of peace in which the mind is destitute of all mental modifications. The knowledge that you get from testimony and inference is about objects of the world, but the knowledge that you attain from samadhi is divine knowledge. It is supersensual intuitive knowledge where reason, inference and testimony cannot go.

The various stages described in raja yoga — savitarka, nirvitarka, savichara, nirvichara, sananda and sasmita — all constitute samprajnata or sabija samadhi. All these samadhis have something to grasp. There is argumentation or questioning. They give intense joy but they are not the best and finest forms of samadhi. They cover the gross or the subtle elements of nature and the organs of senses. They give you the direct knowledge of the elements, objects and instruments of knowledge, and some freedom. You transcend time and space.

Savikalpa samadhi of a raja yogi who practises savitarka, savichara, nirvitarka, nirvichara, sananda and sasmita samadhis, leaves the impressions of enquiry, feeling of bliss and the feeling of 'aham asmi' — 'I exist'.

This is called the 'remainder of tendencies' and it corresponds to the lesha avidya (trace of ignorance) the sage experiences after he has attained the state of jivanmukta. On account of this he moves about, takes bath, answers calls of nature and takes food and drink. (The impressions of lesha avidya are like that of the garlic smell which the pot emanates even after it is washed several times.)

Camphor melts in the fire and assumes the form of fire. When salt is dissolved in water, it is no longer perceived separately; the water alone remains. Even so, the mind that has assumed the form of Brahman which is secondless, is no longer perceived. Brahman alone remains in its pristine glory.

> *By the suppression of that samskara also (the samadhi samskara) due to the suppression of all samskaras, comes the nirbija samadhi.*
> (I-51)

When the samskara caused by the experience of consciousness full of Truth is also restrained, all the other samskaras are also totally restrained. Now all the seeds are totally burnt up in the fire of asamprajnata samadhi. The mind, thus having nothing to rest upon, is destroyed by itself (mano-nasha). Purusha alone shines in perfect bliss, knowledge, peace and glory. The yogi is absolutely free. He realises his own immortal nature.

In asamprajnata, nirbija or nirvikalpa samadhi there is no ego-consciousness. Ego and mind melt and fuse in Brahman. The distinction of knower, knowledge and the object of knowing completely vanishes. The pure mind assumes the form of Brahman.

This is the highest form of samadhi. This comes after intuitional knowledge or the final discrimination between matter (prakriti) and spirit (Purusha). All the seeds or impressions are burnt by the fire of knowledge. This samadhi brings absolute independence. It is the culmination or climax of yoga and bestows supreme undying peace or knowledge. The yogi enjoys the transcendental glories of the Self and has perfect freedom from mental life. The sense of time is replaced by a sense of eternity.

In this samadhi there is neither seer, seen nor the act of seeing, nor support. This samadhi alone can destroy birth and death and bring highest knowledge and bliss.

This is known as asti-bhati-priya or sat-cit-ananda. That which ever exists is asti (sat); that which ever shines is bhati, absolute consciousness (chit); that which gives happiness always is priya, unalloyed bliss (ananda). This state is indescribable.

In vedanta they call it arupa manonasha and sarupa manonasha. Manonasha is destruction of the mind. In sarupa manonasha, rajas and tamas are completely destroyed and sattva alone remains. Sarupa manonasha is for the jivanmukta. Jivanmuktas have the form of the mind for the purpose of serving the world. Arupa manonasha comes in videhamukti, where the whole mind is destroyed.

There are two kinds of asamprajnata or nirvikalpa samadhi. In the first the jnani, by resting in Brahman, sees the whole world within himself as a movement of ideas, as a mode of being or a mode of his own existence, like Brahman. Brahman sees the world within Himself as His own imagination (sankalpa). So also does a jnani. This is the highest state of realisation as in the case of Lord Krishna, Lord Dattatreya, Sri Sankara, Jnana Dev and others.

In the second variety the world vanishes from view and the jnani rests on pure attributeless Brahman.

When you get full success or perfection in raja yoga by entering into nirvikalpa samadhi, the five afflictions of ignorance, egoism, love, hatred and clinging to life are destroyed, and the bonds of karma are annihilated. This samadhi brings the highest good and exaltation. It gives deliverance from the wheel of birth and death. There is no imagination (vikalpa) of any sort in this condition. There is no functioning of mind or intellect. All vrittis totally cease and there is only pure consciousness or awareness.

> *Then comes the removal of all coverings of impurities due to the infinity of knowledge, and the knowable becomes very little.* (IV-31)

Knowledge that ordinary men get from worldly experiences becomes very very insignificant. The knowledge of the yogis is like a sun. The knowledge of objects is like the light of a glow-worm.

In this samadhi the yogi sees without eyes, tastes without tongue, hears without ears, smells without nose and touches without skin. His thought-force can work miracles. He simply wills and everything comes into being. This state is described in the *Taittiriya*

Aranyaka thus: "*The blind man pierced the pearl, the fingerless put a thread into it, the neckless wore it and the tongueless praised it.* "(I-II-5).

Eventually he realises his own native state of divine glory, isolation or absolute independence (kaivalya). He has completely disconnected himself from nature and its effects. He feels his absolute freedom and attains kaivalya, the highest goal of raja yoga. All karmas are destroyed.

> *Then the succession of the modifications of gunas comes to an end, having fulfilled their part.* (IV-32)

The gunas having fulfilled their objects of enjoyment, now entirely cease to act. He has simultaneous knowledge. The past and the future are blended into the present. Everything is 'now', everything is 'here'.

May you all attain success in raja yoga and enter into nirvikalpa samadhi or the blissful union with the Lord by controlling the senses and the mind, and practising regular and constant meditation!

Jnana Yoga Samadhi

Jnana yoga samadhi is also of two kinds — savikalpa and nirvikalpa. Savikalpa samadhi is a means (sadhana). Nirvikalpa samadhi is the fruit or the result.

Though there is a perception of duality in savikalpa samadhi, in as much as there is distinct recognition of subject and object, yet the duality only helps to know Brahman, One without a second. In the same way as in an earthen jar there is a perception of earth though there be an appearance of a jar, so too is there the perception of the secondless Brahman alone, even though there be an appearance of duality.

Savikalpa samadhi is of two kinds — drishyanuvidha when it is connected with an object, and shabdanuvidha when it is connected with a sound such as 'I am Brahman — aham Brahma asmi'. When it is not associated even with the sound of 'Aham Brahma asmi', it is nirvikalpa. When you meditate on the consciousness as the witness of the modifications of the mind (such as desires, etc.) which are to be regarded as perceivable objects, it is inner antar drishyanuvidha savikalpa samadhi. When you meditate and actually feel: 'I am unattached, existence, knowledge, bliss absolute, self-luminous and non-dual,' it is antah shabdanuvidha savikalpa samadhi.

When you see only Brahman in the external objects by separating the names and forms, it is termed bahir drishyanuvidha savikalpa samadhi. That constant reflection that the unlimited substance of existence, knowledge, bliss absolute (which is always of one nature) is Brahman, is the middle kind of samadhi or bahir shabdanuvidha savikalpa samadhi. By the practice and experience of these two kinds of samadhi, that steady state of the mind produced owing to the realisation of bliss (like the ocean without waves) is called the third kind of samadhi or bahir nirvikalpa samadhi.

That steady state of mind like the unflickering flame of a light in a place free from wind, wherein one gets indifferent to both objects and sounds owing to his total merging in the realisation of his own real Self (Brahman), is termed antar nirvikalpa samadhi. One should always spend his time in these kinds of samadhi. By these samadhis the identification with the body vanishes, the highest Self is realised and the mind is always in samadhi wherever (or in whatever place) and to whatever object it is directed (or runs to).

According to vedanta, annihilation of ignorance leads to samadhi. According to Patanjali Maharishi, the aspirant attains samadhi by removing the hold of the world by practice and discipline.

The vedantin enjoys the eternal bliss and natural ease of sahaja samadhi. He remains as a silent witness. He does not make any serious attempt to control the psychic stream or thought current. He raises the thought of Brahman alone by meditation on the significance of Tat-tvam-asi mahavakya. The subconscious (chitta) is modified in the form of the thought of Brahman alone. All other modifications are withdrawn. This thought (vritti) annihilates the ignorance and dies by itself, and Brahman shines out as the aspirant realises his identity. When this vritti is continuous, the highest form of samadhi, i.e., nirvikalpa samadhi, is attained. When it is intermittent the sage attains savikalpa samadhi.

Samadhi in the jnani is effortless and spontaneous. Wherever the mind goes, there it experiences samadhi. He rests in samadhi always. There is no 'in samadhi' and 'out of samadhi' for a sage. He experiences samadhi always, without any effort. Hence, it is called sahajavastha or sahaja samadhi. He enjoys freedom, bliss and peace in all moments of his life. He drinks the nectar of immortality in this very life.

Bhakti Yoga Samadhi

In bhakti yoga there is absence of the least tinge of pride and self-assertion. The devotee does total unreserved self-surrender to the Lord. He resigns himself completely to the Lord and obtains His grace. Grace is a mighty spiritual force. It transforms the entire being of a devotee. It infuses in him inspiration and a new divine life. Self-surrender makes the devotee feel the reality of divine grace and the Lord's readiness to bestow help on him at all times. It is through grace alone that the devotee's whole being is galvanized and rejuvenated. Through divine grace there is inflow of divine energy into the entire being of a devotee and his whole being is properly moulded for divine realisation and divine instrumentality.

Liberation (moksha) is loss of one's personality in the divine. It is deliverance from delusion of personality. There is no annihilation by the melting of this little false personality. Just as the river becomes the ocean itself, the individual soul becomes the mighty supreme Soul with higher consciousness and transcendental bliss and knowledge.

There are nine modes or rungs in navavidha bhakti. They are sravana, kirtana, smarana, padasevana, archana, vandana, dasya, sakhya and Atmanivedana. Sravana is hearing His lilas (stories of God and His divine play), kirtana is singing His names, smarana is remembrance, padasevana is service of His feet, archana is offering of flowers to the Lord, vandana is prostrations, dasya is servant attitude towards the Lord, sakhya is friendship with the Lord and Atmanivedana is self-surrender.

Admiration, faith, devotion, taste for repetition and singing of the Lord's name, firm devoutness, intense attachment to the Lord, steadiness in God-love and transcendental God-love (absorption) are the eight steps in the ladder of prema or bhakti yoga. Salokya, samipya, sarupya and sayujya (remaining in the world of God, staying near God, assuming the form of God and remaining absorbed in Him) are the four kinds of mukti (liberation) of the devotees.

Surrender draws down grace. The individual becomes one with the cosmic Will through surrender. Grace makes surrender complete. Without grace perfect union is not possible. Surrender and grace are inter-related. Grace removes all obstacles, snares and pit-falls in the spiritual path.

The samadhi experienced by a bhakta is bhava samadhi. The devotee attains the state through bhava and maha bhava. A bhakta who meditates on the form of Lord Sri Krishna will see Krishna and Krishna only everywhere when he is established in samadhi. He will see himself as Sri Krishna. The gopis of Brindavan and Gouranga and Ekanath had this experience. Those who meditate on the all-pervading Krishna will have another kind of experience — the consciousness of Virat (the Lord in His form as the manifested universe).

The bhakta enjoys the warm embrace of the divine. He attains divine auspiciousness. All the spiritual wealth of the Lord belongs to him. He is endowed with divine vision, lustrous subtle body and divine senses. He does not like to have complete absorption or merging in the Lord, but wants to remain himself separate in front of Him and taste the divine honey of God-love. The absorption in the Lord comes to him temporarily in the intensity of his love and experience in the beginning, though he does not like it. He then attains similarity with God. He is God-like. Eventually he attains sayujya or oneness but does not lose his separate identity as a devotee.

Samadhi and Work

The state of samadhi is maintained even during work. The mind and body are used as perfect instruments in the service of the Atman that is seated in the hearts of all. Even during action Sri Sankara, Lord Krishna and Lord Rama did not move an inch from their being established in Brahman. Rajah Janaka enjoyed true samadhi even while ruling his kingdom. He never lost sight of Brahman even for a moment. When he was put to the test he said: "Even if the whole of Mithila (his kingdom) is burnt, nothing is lost for me. I have the inexhaustible imperishable wealth of the Atman". He who is established in samadhi keeps his mind and body in perfect balance and utilises them in the service of humanity with the feeling that everything is Atman. He is ever fixed in Brahman. He is always in samadhi. There is no tossing of mind for him, under any condition. He stands adamantine on account of his knowledge of the Self. Real samadhi should be kept up as much in action as in meditation. This is the real test of one's inner strength and realisation. This is real chaitanya samadhi. A samadhi that one enters into in mountain-caves and forests with closed eyes, but that is broken or shattered during work, is not the ultimate samadhi.

As long as you are established in a samadhi, there is only Brahman or the Absolute. Continuous unbroken (nirantara) samadhi does not mean sitting blind-folded, but the renunciation of attachment to the body, regarding the individual soul and supreme Soul as one, and knowing that the practitioner himself is the supreme Soul and acting upon this knowledge. Samadhi means the annihilation or absorption of the mind. Wherever he goes he beholds the one Self everywhere.

Neither self-abnegation nor self-knowledge is enough, but the co-existence of both self-abnegation and self-knowledge constitutes nirantara samadhi.

He in whom these co-exist has no body-identification.

GLOSSARY

Abhinivesha: Clinging to earthly life
Abhyasa: Practice
Adhyaropa-apaveda: Method of rejecting the illusory superimposition of one thing on another, e.g. seeing a snake in a rope
Advaita vedanta: Non-dualistic philosophy
Agami Karma: Karma to be enjoyed later
Aham: I; the ego
Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahman
Ahamgraha upasana: Vedantic worship
Ahimsa: Non-violence
Ajapa-japa: Soham, which is produced automatically by the breath
Ajna chakra: The chakra or lotus at the junction of the eybrows
Akasha: Ether
Alasya: Laziness
Anahata chakra: The chakra at the heart centre
Anahata sounds: Mystic sounds
Ananda: Bliss
Ananda kutir: Abode of bliss
Anatman: Non-Self
Anga: Limb
Antahkarana: Fourfold mind: mind, intellect, ego and subconscious mind
Antaranga: Internal sadhana
Antaryamin: Indweller
Antaratma: The indwelling Self: inner soul
Antarmukha vritti: A state in which the mind is turned inwards
Anubhava vakya: Testimony of experience
Anvaya-vyatireka: Proof by assertion and negation
Apana: The down-going breath
Aparigraha: Non-covetousness
Aparoksha anubhava: Direct perception
Apta vakya: Testimony of the wise
Arupa manonasha: Destruction of the mind without form, as in videhamukti
Arurukshu: One who is attempting to climb the steps of yoga
Asamprajnata samadhi: Highest superconscious state, where the mind and ego-sense are completely annihilated
Asana: Posture; seat
Asanajaya: Perfection in posture
Asana-siddhi: Perfection in posture
Asmi: I am; I exist
Asti-bhati-priya: Sat-chid-ananda; the eternal qualities inherent in Brahman

Asvini mudra: A technique in hatha yoga
Asmita: Egoism
Asteyam: Non-stealing
Atma-jnana: Knowledge of the Self
Atman: The Self
Atma-sankalpa: Enquiry into the Self
Avidya: Ignorance

Bandha: A certain class of exercise in hatha yoga
Bhagavad Gita: A Hindu scripture
Bhagavan: The Lord
Bhagavatam: A Hindu scripture
Bhajan: Song in praise of the Lord
Bhakta: Devotee
Bhakti: Devotion
Bhakti marga: The path of bhakti or devotion
Bhavana (bhav): Mental attitude
Bhava samadhi: Superconscious state attained by bhaktas or devotees through intense divine emotion
Bhava-tyaga lakshana: The method of abandoning the word-meaning of 'Thou art That' and contemplating on what it means in essence
Bhava-vastu: A thing that exists
Bhiksha: Alms
Bhrumadhya drishti: Gazing at the space between the eyebrows
Bhuma: The unconditioned; infinite; Brahman
Bindu: A point
Brahmacharya: Celibacy
Brahma jnana: Direct knowledge of Brahman
Brahmakara vritti: The thought of Brahman alone to the exclusion of all other thoughts
Brahmamuhurta: Period of an hour and a half before sunrise
Brahman: The Absolute Reality
Brahma-sakshatkara: Direct realisation of the Absolute
Brahma vichara: Enquiry into Brahman
Buddhi: Intellect

Chaitanya shakti: The power of Absolute consciousness
Chaitanya samadhi: The state of superconsciousness which is marked by absolute self-awareness and ilumination
Chakra: Centre of psychic energy in the human system
Chin-chini: Mystic sound
Chit: The principle of universal Intelligence or Consciousness
Chitta: Subconscious mind; mind-stuff
Coolie: Labourer

Daghdha: Burnt; destroyed
Darshan: Insight; seeing
Dama: Control of the senses
Deva: A god
Devata: The deity that receives the worship of men and gives them what they desire
Devi: A goddess
Dharana: Concentration
Dharma: Righteous way of living; characteristics; virtue
Dhyana: Meditation
Dravya shakti: Power of substantiality
Dvesha: Hatred, dislike

Ekadasi: Eleventh day of the Hindu lunar fortnight

Gayatri: One of the most sacred vedic mantras
Gita: See *Bhagavad Gita*
Gopis: The milkmaids of Brindavan who were devoted to Lord Krishna
Guna: Quality born of nature
Guru: Teacher, preceptor
Guru stotras: Hymns to the guru

Hamsa: Swan
Hatha yoga: A system of yoga for gaining control over the body and prana
Hiranyagarbha: Cosmic intelligence

Ida: Psychic nerve-current flowing through the left nostril
Indra: A Hindu deity
Indriyas: The sense-organs
Ishta devata: The particular form of god that one is devoted to
Ishvara: God
Ishvarapranidhana: Devotion to God
Ishvararpana: Offering to God

Jada samadhi: The state of samadhi induced by hatha yoga processes in which there is no illumination or awareness
Japa: Repetition of a mantra
Japa mala: Rosary of 108 beads
Jiva: Individual soul
Jivanmukta: One who is liberated in this life
Jnana: Wisdom
Jnana indriya: Organ of perception
Jnana shakti: Power of knowing; the omnipotent universal force of knowledge
Jnana yoga: The path of knowledge
Jnani: A jnana yogi; a man of wisdom
Jyoti-dhyana: Meditation on light

Kaivalya: Emancipation; transcendental state of absolute independence
Kali Yuga: The present age
Kalpa: A day of Brahma: 4,320,000,000 years
Kama: Passion
Karma: Action
Karma indriya: Organ of action
Karma yoga: The yoga of selfless action; see Volume III: *Karma Yoga*
Kevala: Alone; one without a second
Khecari mudra: A technique of hatha yoga
Kirtan: Singing the names and glories of God
Kleshas: Afflictions, pains
Kriyas (kriya yoga): Physical action
Kriya shakti: The power or faculty of action

Kumbhaka: Retention of breath
Kundalini: The primordial cosmic energy located in the individual

Lakshana vakya: Characteristic sentence
Lakshya: Point of concentration
Laya: Dissolution, merging, absorption
Laya chintana: Concentration of the mind with a view to dissolve it
Laya yoga: Process of absorption of the individual soul into the Supreme Soul
Lesha avidya: Trace of ignorance
Lila: Play; sport; the cosmos looked upon as a divine play

Maha : Great
Mahatma: Great soul; saint; sage
Mahavakya: Four great Upanishadic sentences
Mala: A rosary of 108 beads
Manana: Reflection; meditation on the eternal truths
Manas: Mind; the thinking faculty
Manipura: The plexus situated in the region of the navel
Mano-nasha: Destruction of the mind
Mantra: Sacred syllable or set of words
Math: Indian monastery
Matra: A unit of time
Mauna: Vow of silence
Mauni baba: One who practices mauna
Maya: The Lord's illusory power
Moha: Infatuation; deluded attachment
Moksha: Liberation
Mudra: A certain class of exercise in hatha yoga
Mukti: Liberation
Muladhara: The plexus situated at the base of the spine

Mula prakriti: The ultimate cause for all matter
Mumukshutva: Yearning for liberation

Nada: Mystic sound
Nadis: Psychic channel
Namaskara: Indian greeting
Nasikagra: Tip of the nose
Nauli: Hatha yoga kriya
Neti-neti: 'Not this, not this'
Nididhyasana: Profound and deep meditation
Nidra: Sleep; either dreaming or deep sleep state
Niralamba: Supportless
Nirbija samadhi: Samadhi without seed
Nirguna: Without attributes
Nirodhah: Restraint; suppression
Nirvana: Liberation; final emancipation
Nirvikalpa samadhi: The superconscious state where there is no mind
Nirvichara samadhi: Samadhi without logic and enquiry
Nirvitaka samadhi: Superconscious state where there is no intellectual argumentation or logic
Niyama: The second step in raja yoga

Ojas: Spiritual energy
OM: The sacred syllable symbolising Brahman
Omkara: Same as OM

Padmasana: The lotus posture
Pancha shanti: Peace prayer
Pandit: Priest; scholar
Paramahamsa: Highest state of sannyas
Param-brahman: The transcendental Reality
Paravakya: A great saying
Pingala: The psychic current flowing through the right nostril
Pradhana: Another term for prakriti; undifferentiated matter
Prakriti: The root base of all elements; primordial nature
Prana: Vital energy; life-breath; life-force
Pranava: OM
Pranayama: Regulation and restraint of the breath, prana
Prarabdha: The particular portion of karma allotted for being worked out in the present birth
Prasupta: Deep sleep
Pratipaksha bhavana: Contemplation on the opposite quality
Pratyahara: Sense-control
Prem: Divine love
Puraka: Inhalation
Purusha: The Supreme Being

Raga: Attraction
Raga, ragini: Melodic structures in Indian music
Rahita-dhyana: Without meditation
Rajah: King
Rajas: The principle of dynamism
Rajasic: Pertaining to rajas
Rama: A Hindu god
Ramayana: A Hindu epic
Rasavada: Tasting the bliss of savikalpa samadhi
Rechaka: Exhalation
Riddhis: Highest sensual delight; wealth; nine varieties of extraordinary exaltation and grandeur that come to a yogi as he progresses in yoga; great obstacles in yoga
Rishi: Sage; seer of the truth

Sabija samadhi: Savikalpa samadhi wherein the seed of samskaras is not destroyed
Sadachara: Right conduct
Sad-guru: Venerable guru
Sadhaka: A spiritual aspirant
Sadhana: Spiritual practice
Sadhu: Pious or righteous man: a sannyasin
Saguna: With qualities
Sahaja: Natural

Sahasrara chakra: Region in the top of the head in the form of a thousand-petalled lotus

Sahaja avastha: Superconscious state that has becme natural and continuous

Saivite: Worshipper of Lord Siva

Sakshatkara vakya: Direct experience

Sakshi: Witnessing principle; seer

Sakshi jnana: Witness knowledge

Salambana samadhi: See savikalpa samadhi

Sama: Calmness of mind

Samadhana: Proper concentration

Samadhi: The state of superconsciousness

Samata: Balanced state of mind

Samajist: Social reformer

Samprajnata samadhi: State of superconsciousness wherein there is triad of meditator, meditation and the meditated

Samsara: The process of worldly life

Samskara: Impression; tendency

Samyag darshan: Equal vision; perfect knowledge

Samyama: Concentration, meditation and samadhi combined

Sananda samadhi: Samadhi with bliss

Sanatanist: Follower of the Eternal Religion (Hinduism)

Sanchita Karma: All the accumulated actions of all previous births

Sankalpa: Thought; desire; imagination

Sannyasin: A monk; one who has embraced the life of complete renunciation

Santi: Peace

Santosha: Contentment

Sarangati: Self-surrender

Sarupa manonasha: A state of mind where rajas and tamas are completely destroyed and sattva alone remains

Sarvangasana: Hatha yoga posture; see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Sasmita samadhi: Samadhi with the egoistic feeling of 'I exist'

Sastras: Scriptures

Satchidananda: Existence, knowledge, bliss Absolute

Satsang(a): Association with the wise

Sattva: The principle of purity

Sattvic: Pertaining to sattva

Satyam: Truth

Satya yuga: First of the Four Ages

Saucha: Purity

Savichara samadhi: Samadhi with deliberation and reasoning

Savikalpa samadhi: Samadhi with the triad of knower, knowledge and known

Savitarka samadhi: Samadhi with argumentation

Sayujya: Becoming one with God

Shakti: Power; energy; force

Siddha: A perfected yogi

Siddhasana: A meditation pose

Siddhi: Psychic power

Sirshasana: Headstand; see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Sitali: A breathing exercise in hatha yoga; see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Siva: The third aspect of Brahman in the Hindu trinity

Siva jnana: Auspiciousness; knowledge

Sivaratri: The night when Lord Siva is worshipped

Skandha: A martial god of the Hindus

Soham: A mantra meaning 'I am He'

Sravana: Listening to the scriptures preparatory to meditating on them: see Volume VI: *Vedanta or Jnana Yoga*

Stabdha avastha: Stunned state of the mind wherein its movements are arrested

Sukhasana: A meditation posture: see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

Sukha purvak: A breathing exercise: see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*

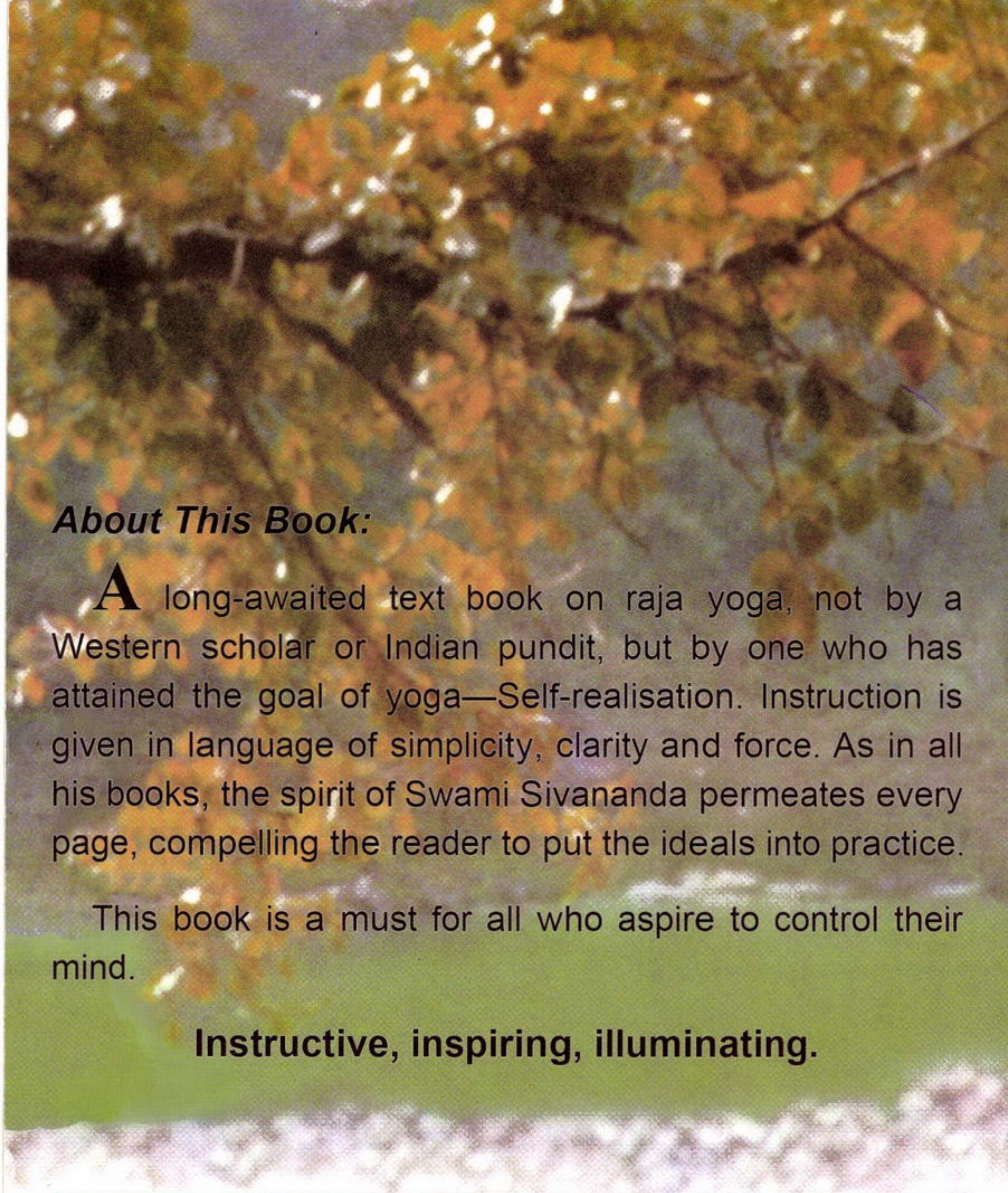
Sushumna: The principal psychic channel through the centre of the spinal column
Sutra: An aphorism
Svadhisthana: The chakra situated in the area of the root of the genitals
Svadhyaya: Study of scriptures
Svastikasana: A meditation posture: see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*
Swami: A spiritual master

Tamas: The principle of inertia
Tamasic : Pertaining to tamas
Tandra: Half-sleepy state
Tanmatra: Atom; rudimentary element
Tanu: Thread-like
Tapas: Austerity
Tapascharya: Practice of tapas
Tapasvin: One who has reached the goal of tapas
Tatbodha jnana: The highest wisdom
Tat tvam asi: 'Thou art That'
Tratak: Steady gazing
Trikuti: The space between the eyebrows
Turiya: The fourth state of consciousness
Turyatita: Beyond the fourth state

Uddiyana bandha: A hatha yoga kriya: see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*
Upadesha: Instruction
Upadesha vakya: Words of instruction
Upanishads: Revealed scriptures of the Hindus
Urdhvaretas: Sexual sublimation

Vairagya: Dispassion
Vairagya Dindima: A text by Sankaracharya
Vaishnavite: A devotee of Lord Vishnu
Vajrasana: A meditation posture
Vak-siddhi: Perfection in speech
Vasana: Subtle desire
Vedanta: One of the six systems of Hindu philosophy, based on the teachings of the Upanishads which contain the end of the vedas.
Vedas: The most ancient authentic revealed scriptures of the Hindus
Veena: A stringed musical instrument
Vichara: Enquiry into the nature of the Self
Videhamukti: Salvation attained by the realised soul after shaking off the physical sheath
Vidya: Knowledge (of Brahman)
Vikalpa: Imagination; oscillation of the mind
Viksepa: Tossing of the mind
Virat: The physical world that we see; the Lord in His form as the manifested universe
Vishnu: The second of the Hindu trinity
Viveka: Discrimination between the Real and the unreal
Viveka Chudamani: A text on Vedanta by Sankaracharya
Vritti: Thought wave; mental modification
Vyasa: A great sage; author of the *Brahma Sutras, etc.*

Yama: Restraint; the second limb of raja yoga
Yama (Lord): The god of death
Yoga mudra: A hatha yoga exercise: see Volume II: *Health and Hatha Yoga*
Yogarudha: One who is established in yoga
Yoga vidya: Knowledge of yoga
Yunjana: Joining



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A long-awaited text book on raja yoga, not by a Western scholar or Indian pundit, but by one who has attained the goal of yoga—Self-realisation. Instruction is given in language of simplicity, clarity and force. As in all his books, the spirit of Swami Sivananda permeates every page, compelling the reader to put the ideals into practice.

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ISBN 81-7052-220-X

EO70 ₹ 175/-

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